# Arlington

## Residential Design Guidelines

**Epping Street, Arlington**

**Prepared for:**
Town of Arlington
Department of Planning and
Community Development

**Prepared by:**
Harriman

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# Acknowledgments


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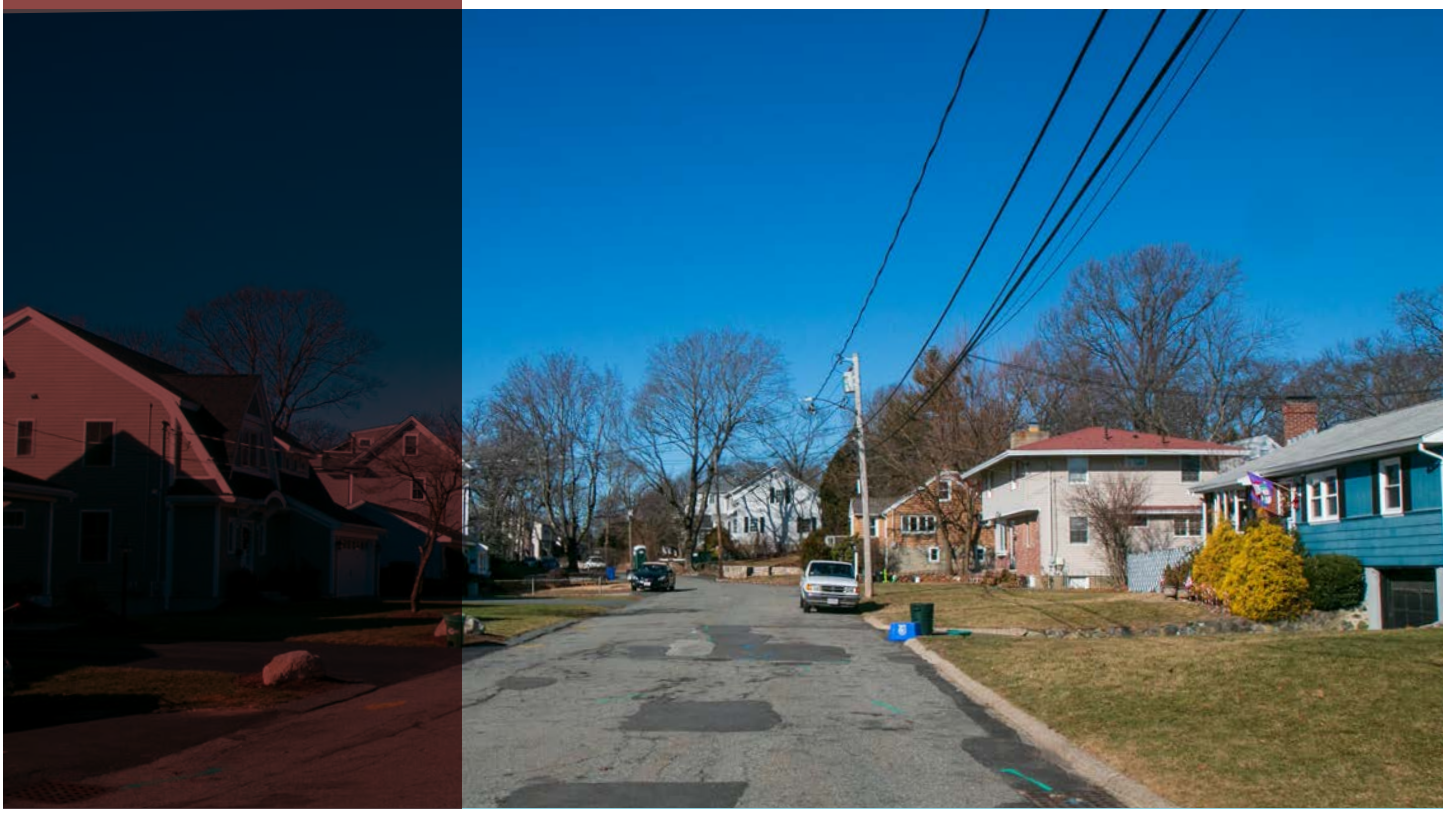


Epping Street in Morningside

**Arlington is made up of several unique neighborhoods. The diverse houses that make up these neighborhoods give them character and identity. The Residential Design Guidelines will help homeowners, neighbors, and builders to construct and renovate homes that fit within their context.**

In May 2015, the Arlington Town Meeting voted to endorse the Arlington Master Plan, "Your Town Your Future", which sets forth policy goals and strategies for the community. In response to a key recommendation from the Master Plan, the Town adopted "The Design Standards for the Town of Arlington." These design guidelines help the Town regulate built form and clarify expectations for both developers and the community. The design standards focus on shaping projects in Arlington's primary commercial and transportation corridors along Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway. The Design Standards address building siting and orientation, height and setbacks, parking strategies, and signage. The Arlington Redevelopment Board incorporates these design standards in their review of projects that trigger Environmental Design Review. Multi-family, mixed-use, and commercial developments are generally subject to Environmental Design Review as part of a Special Permit process.

While the current Design Standards apply to business, industrial, and higher-density residential zoning districts, 73% of Arlington is dedicated to low-density residential districts (R0, R1, R2). Most small residential projects in these areas are not subject to the 2015 Design Standards. The Master Plan noted that as local residential real estate values increased, older, smaller homes have been replaced by larger houses that are out of scale with the character of existing neighborhoods. Following a year-long research project on the effect of replacement housing on the community, DPCD determined that a set of Residential Design Guidelines, similar to the Design Standards that apply to the commercial corridor, would help guide future development in the low-density residential districts.

**Project Goals**

The goals of this project aimed to create Residential Design Guidelines that:

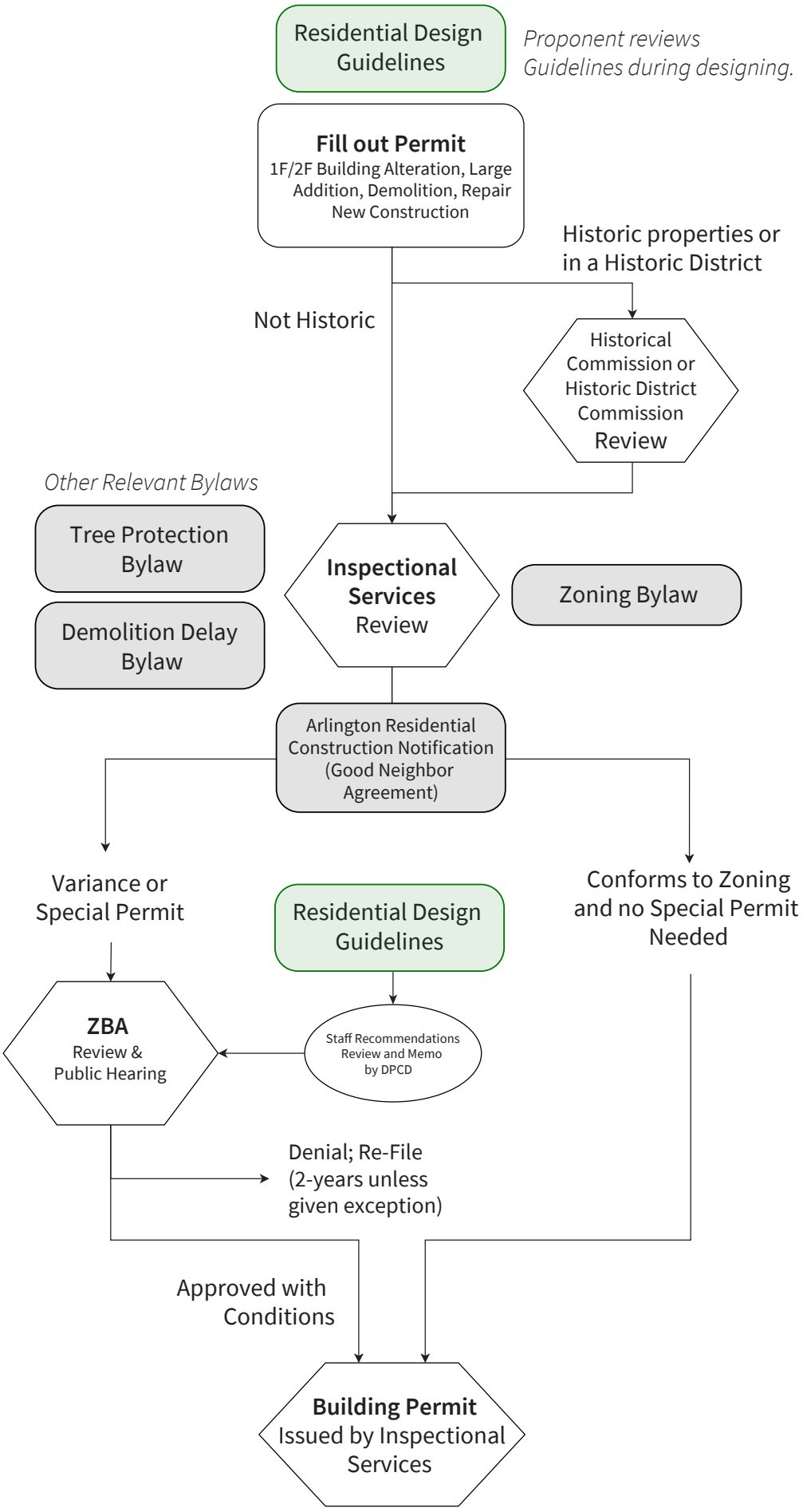
- Address three sets of interests: the preferences of neighborhood residents; the desires of property owners to add onto or replace existing housing; and the general public interests of the Arlington community.
- Reflect and strengthen the unique character of each neighborhood.
- Balance different needs in a clear and understandable way - community and individual, aesthetics and market needs, control and flexibility.
- Recommend a review and approval process that ensures the balance is embodied in the built environment as new structures are built.

**Sections of the Document**

The document begins with the Design Guidelines. The next sections describe the methodology used to inform the neighborhood-centric Design Guidelines.

- **Residential Design Guidelines:** The Residential Design Guidelines provide strategies to balance differences in lot size between houses. They also provide strategies to mitigate the appearance of new, larger houses while allowing property owners to build to the allowed zoning envelope. Because any street in Arlington is a diverse mix of styles, the residential design guidelines are not prescriptive about regulating style. A well-designed modern house can fit in better than a poorly-designed Colonial-style house.

  Instead, the Residential Design Guidelines provide tailored guidance to each of the prevalent housing typologies in each neighborhood.
- **Existing Conditions Analysis:** This section inventories the current conditions of Arlington's residential neighborhoods and helps define the process.
- **Appendix - Community Engagement:** This appendix summarizes the feedback received from the two community workshops, online visual preference survey, and draft review comments. The section also will describe what changes were made to the Design Guidelines in response to community feedback.
- **Appendix - Glossary of Terms and References:** This appendix defines many of the architectural and urban design terms used in this document. It also provides a list of useful books and readings for additional information.


Residential Design Guidelines
Proponent reviews Guidelines during designing.
Fill out Permit
1F/2F Building Alteration, Large Addition, Demolition, Repair New Construction
Historic properties or in a Historic District
Not Historic
Historical Commission or Historic District Commission Review
Other Relevant Bylaws
Tree Protection Bylaw
Demolition Delay Bylaw
Inspectional Services Review
Zoning Bylaw
Arlington Residential Construction Notification (Good Neighbor Agreement)
Variance or Special Permit
Residential Design Guidelines
Conforms to Zoning and no Special Permit Needed
ZBA
Review & Public Hearing
Staff Recommendations Review and Memo by DPCD
Denial; Re-File (2-years unless given exception)
Approved with Conditions
Building Permit
Issued by Inspectional Services

# Glossary

**Additions:** an expansion to the original building, often built on the side, in the rear, or above the original house.

**Architectural detailing:** elements that help to add texture and visually organize the front façade, such as brackets, columns, trim (moulding, cornice), shutters, window frames, door frames.

**Dormer:** a roofed structure that projects vertically beyond the plane of a pitched roof. It usually has a window or multiple windows and is used to increase usable space in the attic or roof space.

**Gable/hipped dormer:** a dormer with a gable or hipped roof. Typically only one window wide.

**Shed dormer:** a dormer with a single flat plane roof, but in this case, it is sloped in the same direction as the principal roof, only at a shallower angle.

**Wall dormer:** As opposed to the dormer being set part way up the slope of the roof, this is a dormer whose face is coplanar with the face of the wall below. This means that the face of the dormer is essentially a continuation of the wall above the level of the eaves.

**Façade:** the face of a building. The front or primary façade is the principal front that looks onto a street or open space.

**Heat islands**: urbanized areas that experience higher temperature due to buildings, roads, and paved surfaces absorbing heat.

**Lot coverage:** percentage of the lot size covered by the house.

**Neighborhood Block Categories:** Common block patterns based on lot size, width, and depth.

**Non-conforming lot:** a lot or parcel that is smaller than allowed in a certain zoning subdistrict.

**Pediment over pilasters:** an ornamental archway with columns that projects from the wall and highlights the front entrance.

**Portico:** a small, covered structure that leads to the entrance, typically supported by columns.

**Porch:** a covered outdoor area attached to the front of the house or wraps around the house.

**Permeable open space:** the percentage of the lot that is not covered by the house or impermeable, paved surfaces such as driveways.

**Permeable surfaces**: surfaces that allow rainwater to soak into the ground.

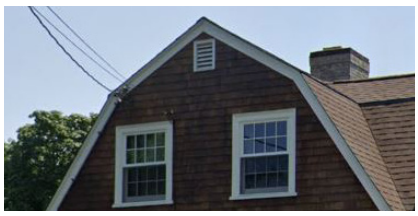
**Proportion**: the visual effect of the sizes and relationships of the various objects and spaces that make up a structure to one another and to the whole.

**Rhythm:** Visual rhythm, just like musical rhythm, is a strong, regular, repeated pattern. In this case, it refers to the established pattern of house sizes and spacing between houses.

**Roof:** Top covering of a building. Common examples include:

**Hipped roof**

**Gable roof**



**Gambrel roof**

**Mansard roof**

**Roof Elements:**


**Eaves:** the part of a roof that meets or overhangs the walls of a building.

**Fascia:** a decorative board extending down from the roof edge either at the eave or at the rake.

**Rake:** the slanting edge of a gable roof at the end wall of the house, particularly on a gable.

**Soffit:** the underside of an architectural structure such as an arch, a balcony, or overhanging eaves.

**Eave return:** a detail that transitions the eave and the main fascia board across the gable end of a house.

**Porkchop return:** the result of connecting the geometry

of a flat soffit (underside of eave) on the side eave with the angle of the gable end. Generally to be avoided.

**Setbacks:** Required distance between building and lot edge.

**Front yard setback:** distance between the house's front façade and the front lot line, or lot line along the street.

**Side yard setback:** distance between the house and the side lot lines, or the lot lines perpendicular to the street.

**Rear yard setback** is the distance between the house and the rear lot line.

**Stoop:** a small staircase ending in a platform and leading to the entrance.

**Streetscape:** the appearance or view of a street.

**Stormwater run-off:** rainwater that does not soak into the ground and is redirected to the sewer system.

# Helpful Resources and References

## About

These guidelines were designed to be used by a general audience. To learn more about the concepts and specific details, please refer to the following resources for additional information. Many of these resources and references were used to inform the guidelines.

## Town Resources


*Arlington's Master Plan, Your Town, Your Future,* 2015. https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/planning-community-development/master-plan/.

*Historic Preservation Survey Master Plan, Final Report*, 2019. https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=48668


## Printed Resources


Duffy, Richard. *Images of America, Arlington.* Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing Library Editions, 1997.

Susanka, Sarah, and Kira Obolensky. *The Not so Big House: a Blueprint for the Way We Really Live.* Newtown, CT: Taunton Press, 2009.

Virginia McAlester et al.. 2013. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.


## Online Resources


*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

This Old House Blog. https://www.thisoldhouse.com/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

Murdock, Todd. "Eave Returns: Interpreting GYHR Details" This is Carpentry. https://www.thisiscarpentry.com/2013/12/13/eave-returns-interpreting-gyhr-details/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

"Gable-End Eave Design." https://www.finehomebuilding.com/project-guides/roofing/design-build-gable-end-eave-design/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

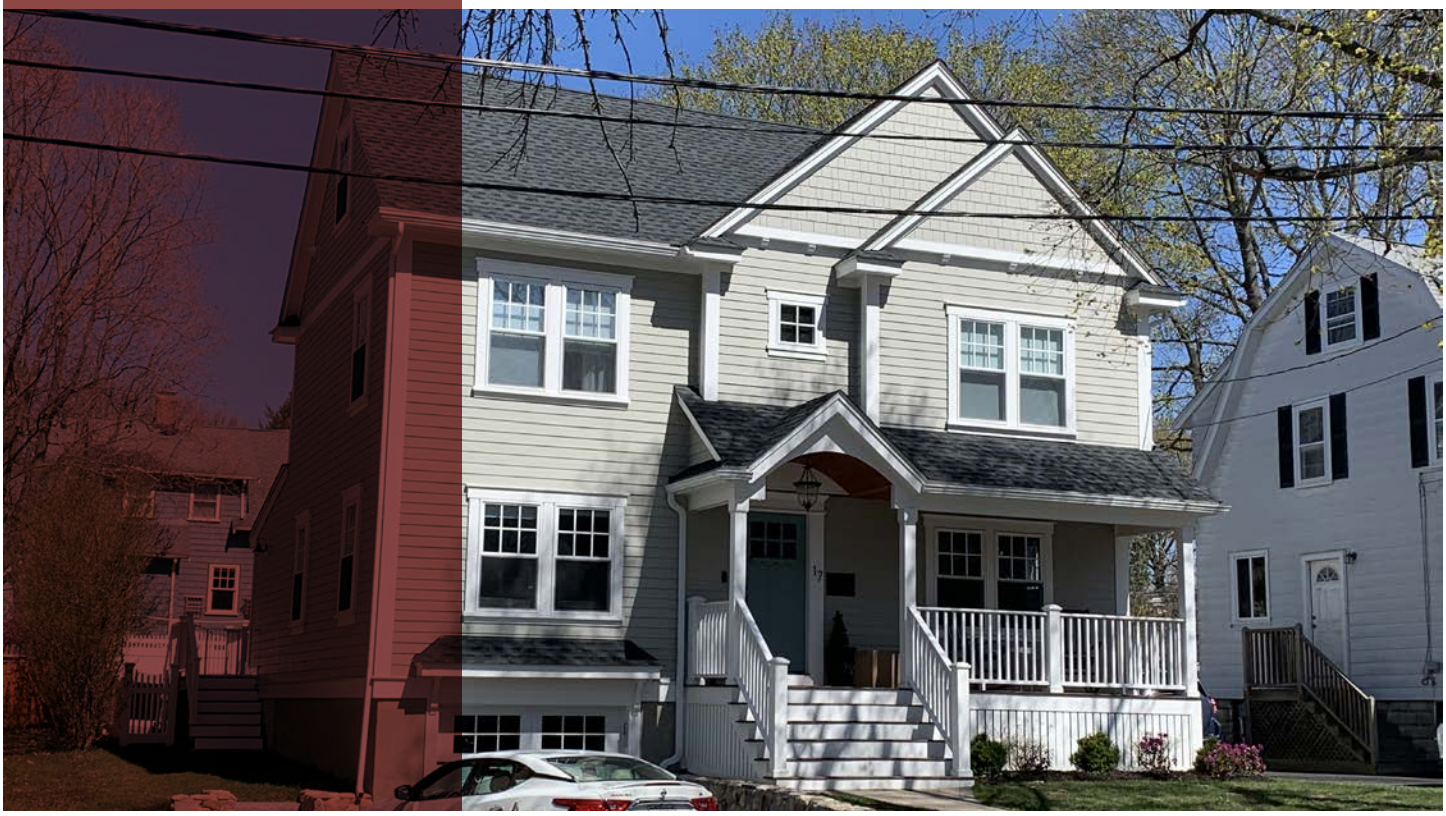
"Boxed-Eave Gable End-Returns." https://www.finehomebuilding.com/project-guides/roofing/boxed-eave-gable-end-returns/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

"Designing the Right Roof Rake." https://www.finehomebuilding.com/project-guides/roofing/designing-the-right-roof-rake/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

Cusato, Marianne. "Shed Dormers." https://www.finehomebuilding.com/membership/pdf/203478/021276096DB.pdf/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

Shaffer, Dimella. "Using Perception to Create Value in Your Housing Projects." https://www.dimellashaffer.com/blog/using-perception-to-create-value-in-your-housing-projects/. (accessed October 22, 2020).

# 2 Residential Design Guidelines



New construction in Arlington Heights.

# Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of the Residential Design Guidelines is to provide residents, builders, and Arlington's review staff a set of best practices to guide new construction and renovations in Arlington's R0, R1, and R2 Zoning Districts.

Based on the existing zoning analysis, the Residential Design Guidelines provide area-specific strategies to balance creative freedom with guidelines to encourage welcoming and walkable neighborhoods. Rather than regulating through hard numbers, the design guidelines can give designers and community stakeholders more flexibility to find creative solutions.

## Using the Document

The Design Guidelines are separated into three primary parts. For example, a homeowner looking to add dormers to a Cape-style house in Arlington Heights could understand which site and building design elements to consider in the Small Lot Streetscape and specific dormer guidelines in the Dormer and Other Roof Elements page.

- **Streetscape Design (A1-A4)** Site design guidelines that apply to all neighborhoods and neighborhood-specific design guidelines.
- **Building Design (B1-B3)** Building guidelines that apply to all housing types and house type-specific guidelines.
- **Building Elements (C1)** Guidelines that apply to specific elements, such as dormers, roof lines, and entrance placement.

## Design Review Process

The Design Guidelines' use will be encouraged at multiple steps of the process.

### Distribution and Education

The Residential Design Guidelines will be available on the Town's website, alongside the Permit to Build (One or Two Family Dwelling) application on the Inspectional Services (ISD) page.

A future, potentially regularly scheduled Zoning and Design clinic would allow homeowners and builders to come ask questions about how zoning and the design guidelines would apply to their projects.

The Design Guidelines will also be shared among local builders, architects, and realtors.

### Pre-Application

The Design Guidelines will be included with other relevant bylaws (e.g., historic districts and demolition permits) in a permitting flowchart handout. Applicants will be encouraged to review the guidelines to see what parts of the guidelines are relevant to their project.

### Post-Application Review

When a proponent files for a building permit, if the project follows all zoning and Town by-laws, it does not need to fully conform with the recommendations of the Design Guidelines. A building permit may be issued.

When a building permit requires a special permit or variance, the Zoning Board of Appeals will review the case, using the Design Guidelines in their decision. Town Planning staff will submit recommendations on cases based on the Design Guidelines.

# Vision and Goals

## Vision

Arlington's residential neighborhoods are defined by their different, unique tight-knit communities. Arlington...

- Welcomes new residents but also helps existing and older residents stay and flourish.
- Offers diverse housing options for families and households at all different stages of life – including students, multi-generational families, and seniors.
- Balances compact, walkable urban living with openness and opportunities to connect with nature.
- Allows for design innovation and creativity that respects the Town's diverse and historic architecture.

## Goals

The following goals reflect past planning efforts and the community feedback:

- Balance the "streetcar suburb" history of Arlington's residential neighborhoods with the changing needs of a growing, dynamic community.
- Encourage creative, sustainable renovations and additions that complement the existing house and neighborhood in scale and style.
- Encourage new houses that are consistent in scale with the neighborhood and are a well-designed addition to an existing streetscape.
- Maintain, protect, preserve, and promote historic and diverse cultural resources in all neighborhoods.

# Guideline Principles

Terms that are underlined in red are defined in the red box to the right and in the Glossary on page 94.

## Streetscape Design Principles

- A-1: New developments should be designed based on the relevant Neighborhood Block Category and local streetscape pattern.
- A-2: New houses and significant additions should be oriented and located in a way that is consistent with their Neighborhood Block Category.
- A-3: Street-facing design elements should enhance or improve the existing streetscape.
- A-4: Creative design solutions and exceptions are encouraged to help new houses and renovations with special circumstances and non-conforming lots in a way that is consistent with the Neighborhood Block Category.

## Building Design Principles

- B-1: Arlington's residential neighborhoods are made up of a range of architectural styles; new houses and renovations are encouraged to borrow elements from existing block styles and avoid being too plain or too complex.
- B-2: Creative design solutions are encouraged to ensure new houses are consistent or compatible with the streetscape's rhythm.
- B-3: New additions are encouraged to match or complement the style of the original structure and match the rhythm of other houses on the street.

## Building Elements Principles

- C-1: Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

**Definitions**

- ***Neighborhood Block Categories:*** Common block patterns based on lot size, width, and depth.
- ***Additions:*** an expansion to the original building, often built on the side, in the rear, or above the original house.
- ***Streetscape:*** the appearance or view of a street.
- ***Non-conforming lot:*** a lot or parcel that is smaller than allowed in a certain zoning district.
- ***Rhythm:*** Visual rhythm, just like musical rhythm, is a strong, regular, repeated pattern. In this case, it refers to the established pattern of house sizes and spacing between houses.

# **Principle A-1:** New developments should be designed based on the relevant Neighborhood Block Category and local streetscape pattern.

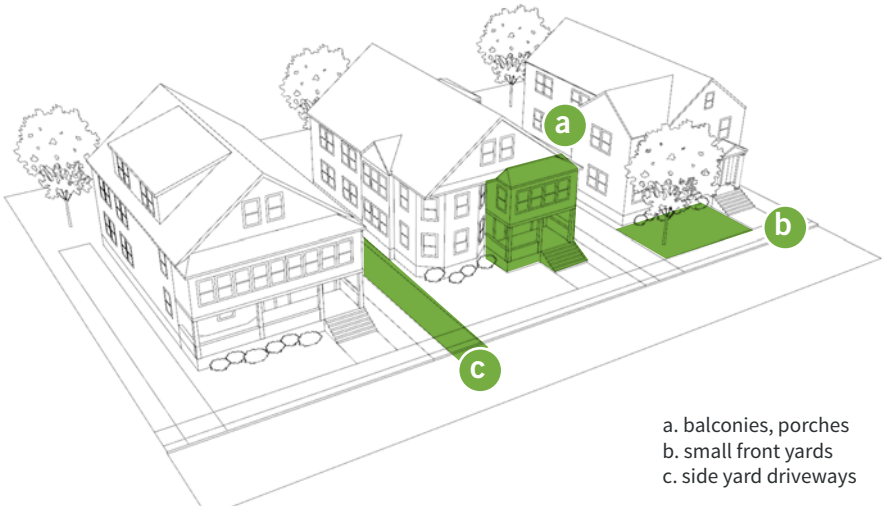
While Arlington's residential neighborhoods primarily fall into only three zoning districts (R0, R1, R2), many blocks within a given zoning district differ in size and feel. The following Neighborhood Block Categories illustrate the differences. New houses and additions should be designed with the streetscape pattern in mind.

## Two-Family, Town core

Found in East Arlington, some areas along Massachusetts Avenue, and other pockets of Arlington.

**Primary Characteristics**

- Mostly 2-family houses.
- Typically 2 ½ Stories.
- Typical Lot Size: Smaller than 5,000 sf. Small front yards.
- Balconies and Porches.
- Side Yard Driveways.



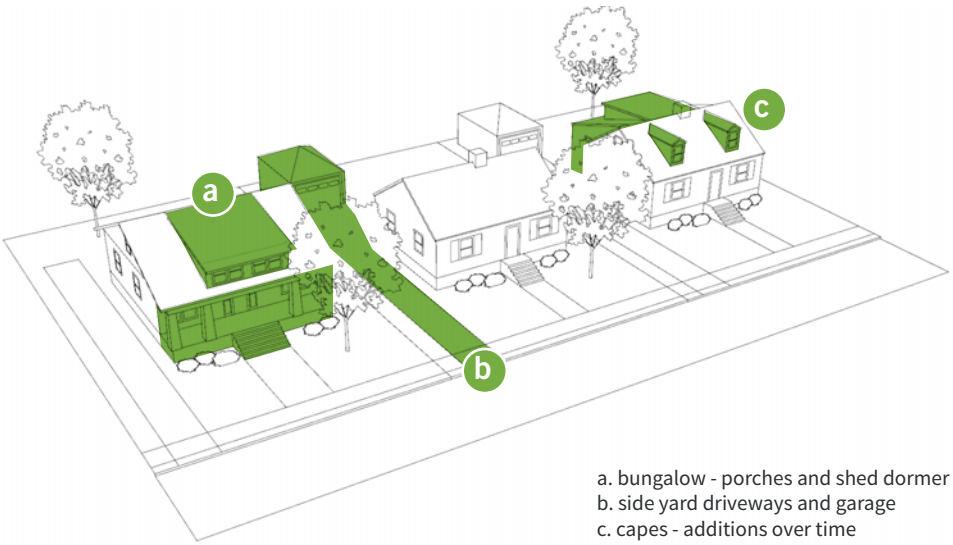

a. balconies, porches
b. small front yards
c. side yard driveways

## Single-Family, Small Lots

Found in parts of Arlington Heights, Poets Corner, Robbins Farm, Mount Gilboa/Turkey Hill.

**Primary Characteristics**

- Capes, Bungalows, and smaller Colonial styles.
- Typically 1 ½ story with some 2 ½ story.
- Typical Lot Size: Smaller than 5,000 sf or 5,000 sf –6,000 sf. Front Yards between 10 ft to 20 ft.
- Side Yard Driveways, Front Yard Driveway.




a. bungalow - porches and shed dormer
b. side yard driveways and garage
c. capes - additions over time

# Principle A-1 (continued)

New developments should be designed based on the relevant Neighborhood Block Category and local streetscape pattern.

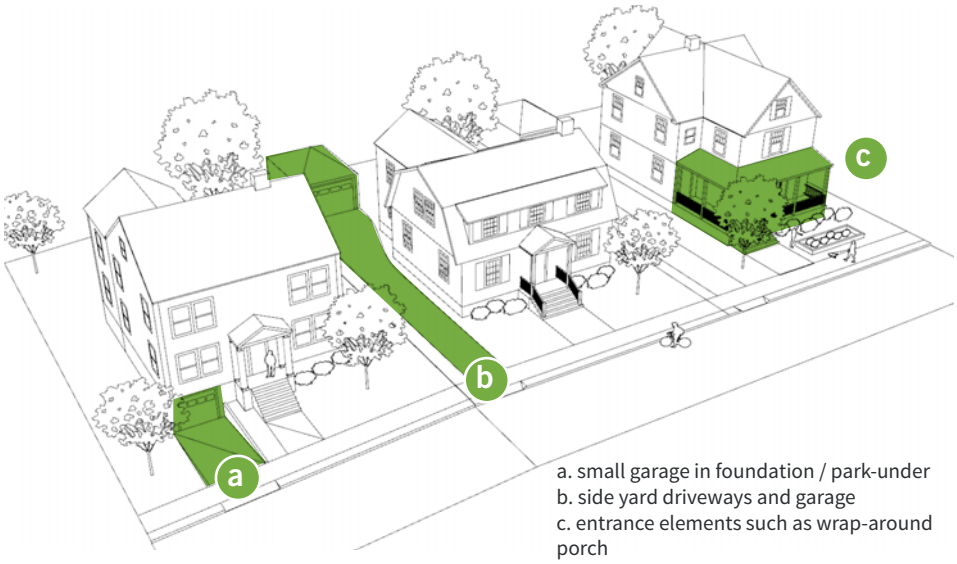
► ***For more info on building styles, refer to Principle B-1 on page 58.***

## Single-Family, Medium Lots

Found across Arlington in Kelwyn Manor, Arlington Center, Jason Heights, Poets Corner, Arlington Heights, Mount Gilboa/Turkey Hill, Morningside.

**Primary Characteristics**

- Diverse styles.
- Typically 2 story or 2 ½ story.
- Typical Lot Size: 5,000 sf – 6,000 sf or 6,000 sf – 9,000. Front Yards between 20 ft to 30 ft.
- Side Yard Driveway with or without rear garage, Park-Under.



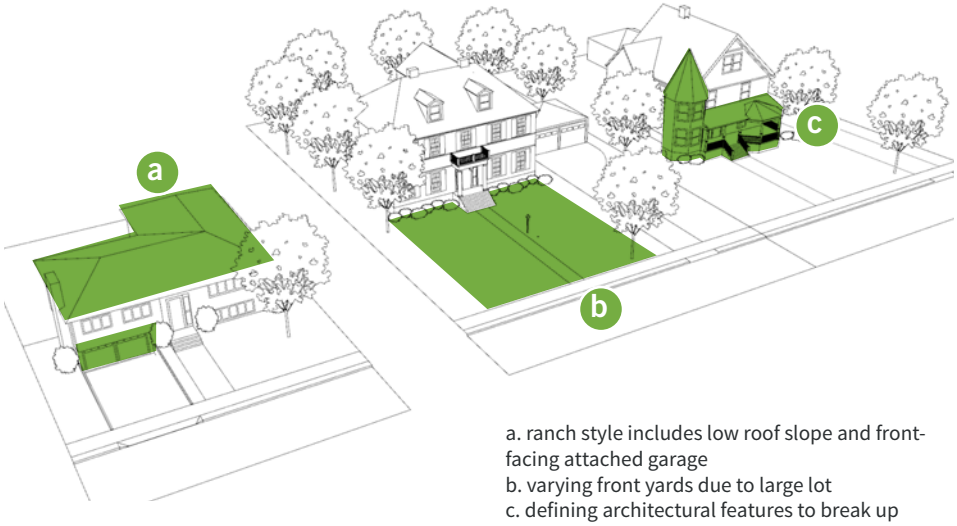

a. small garage in foundation / park-under
b. side yard driveways and garage
c. entrance elements such as wrap-around porch

## Single-Family, Large Lots

Found in Jason Heights, Arlington Center, Morningside, Arlington Heights.

**Primary Characteristics**

- Colonial/Ranch Style (Morningside) and Victorians, Large Colonials (Jason Heights, Arlington Center, Arlington Heights).
- Typical Lot Size: Larger than 9,000 sf. Front yards larger than 25 ft.
- Side Yard Driveway with rear garage, Attached garage.
- Variable front yard setbacks where larger houses are set further back.

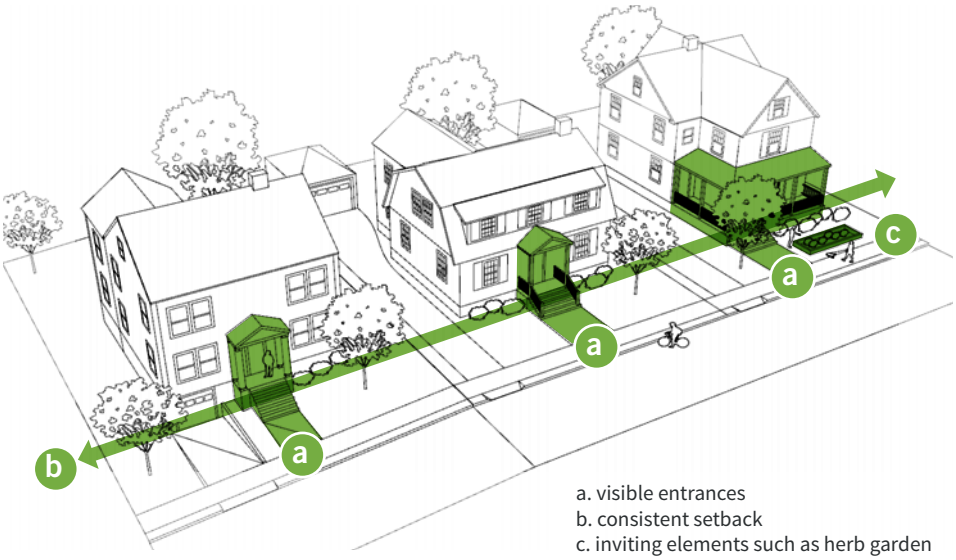



a. ranch style includes low roof slope and front-facing attached garage
b. varying front yards due to large lot
c. defining architectural features to break up massing of larger houses

# **Principle A-2:** New houses and significant additions should be oriented and located in a way that is consistent with their Neighborhood Block Category.

## Front yard areas should add life to the streetscape and feel inviting.

*Zoning Note: See 5.4.2 Table A for full table of dimensions. See 5.3.9 for projections (e.g., bay windows, decks) into yards.*




a. visible entrances
b. consistent setback
c. inviting elements such as herb garden

*Source: Google Streetview.*

### Definition

Front yard setback is the distance between the house's front façade and the front lot line, or lot line along the street.

### Encourage

- Consistent setbacks with neighbors: If the setbacks do not align, align it somewhere in the middle or with one of the neighboring residential buildings.
- Sustainable practices: Think beyond the grass lawn, such as vegetable gardens and low-maintenance native plantings.
- Entrance: The primary entrance should face the street and have a separate walkway from the driveway.
- Public-facing projections: Porches, stoops, and bay windows help break apart the massing to create a human-scaled house.

### Discourage

- Off-street parking: if the lot size allows it, driveways should not be directly in front of the house.
- Mechanicals: air conditioner units and similar equipment should not be in front of the house.
- Paved front yards.

### Block-Specific Recommendations

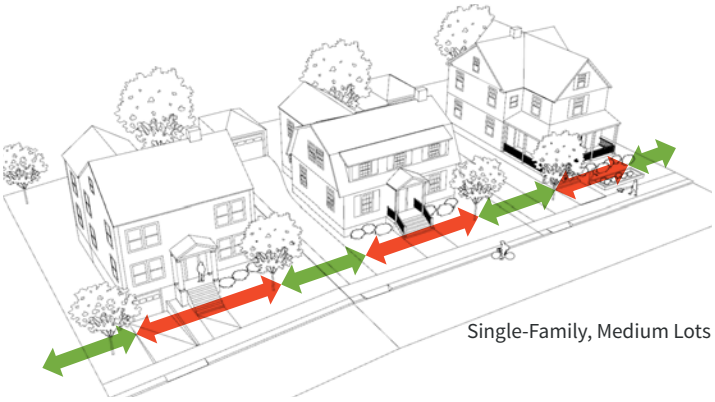
- Two-Family Lot Category: Plantings and landscaping can help make smaller yards (less than 10 feet) feel inviting.

# Principle A-2 (continued)

New houses and significant additions should be oriented and located in a way that is consistent with their Neighborhood Block Category.

► ***For more information on Corner Lots, see Principle A-4 on page 56.***

## Side Yards should reinforce the existing spacing between houses and provide enough privacy between neighbors.



Single-Family, Medium Lots

Two-Family, Town core

Single-Family, Small Lots

### Definition

Side yard setback is the distance between the house and the side lot lines, or the lot lines perpendicular to the street.

### Encourage

- Consistent spacing and rhythm: Follow the existing spacing between houses on the block.
- Greenery and plantings.
- Well-designed fencing.
- Driveways with landscaping.
- Mechanicals: These should be screened with plantings and not very visible from the street.

### Discourage

- Disrupting the streetscape rhythm: Avoid changing the pattern of spacing between houses by placing houses too close to each other.

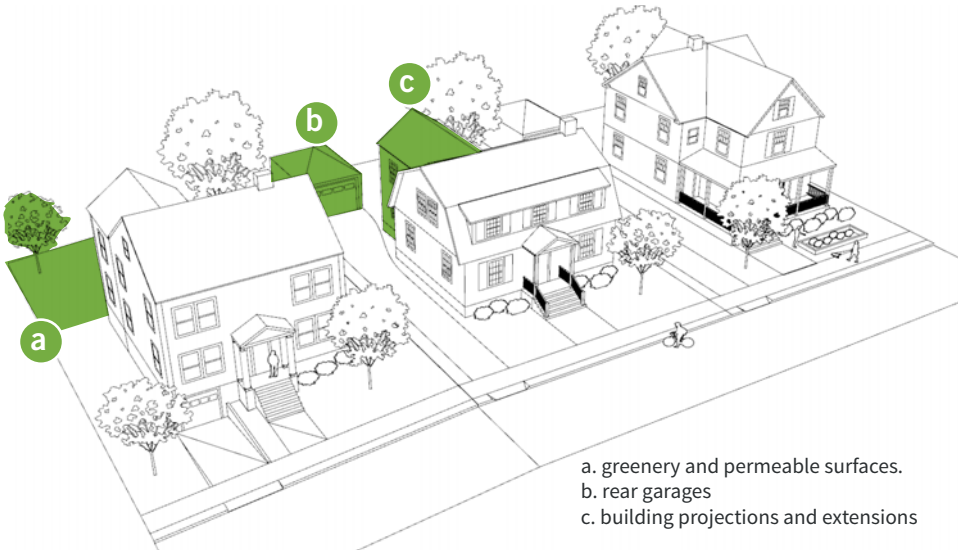
### Block-Specific Recommendations

- Two-Family Lot Category: Many of the two-family houses are close together and use side yard driveways to create space between neighboring houses. New two-family houses without side yard driveways should include sufficient distance from the neighboring structure to reinforce the existing rhythm and pattern of spacing.

# Principle A-2 (continued)

New houses and significant additions should be oriented and located in a way that is consistent with their Neighborhood Block Category.

**Because rear yards are generally not visible from the street, they can be used and built into in many ways.**




a. greenery and permeable surfaces.
b. rear garages
c. building projections and extensions

*Source: Google Streetview.*

### Definition

Rear yard setback is the distance between the house and the rear lot line.

### Encourage

- Permeable surfaces: Lawns, landscaping, gardens, shrubbery, permeable hardscaping and other green ground cover allow rainwater to pass through and reduce runoff.
- Projections: Unenclosed decks or 1-story or 2-story rear additions.
- Rear Garages.
- Mechanicals: Air conditioning units, rainwater cistern.

### Discourage

- Fully paved rear yards: The zoning by-law already requires 10% of the lot to be used for landscaped open space. In general, preserving as much space as permeable, green space helps reduce rainwater runoff.

# Principle A-2 (continued)

New houses and significant additions should be oriented and located in a way that is consistent with their Neighborhood Block Category.

## Permeable open space helps with stormwater and brings natural landscapes to neighborhoods.


a. green open space

*Source: Google Streetview.*

**Definition**

Lot coverage is the percentage of the lot size covered by the house.

Permeable surfaces are surfaces that allow rainwater to soak into the ground.

Stormwater run-off is rainwater that does not soak into the ground and is redirected to the sewer system.

Heat islands are urbanized areas that experience higher temperature due to buildings, roads, and paved surfaces absorbing heat.

Permeable open space is the percentage of the lot that is not covered by the house or impermeable, paved surfaces such as driveways.

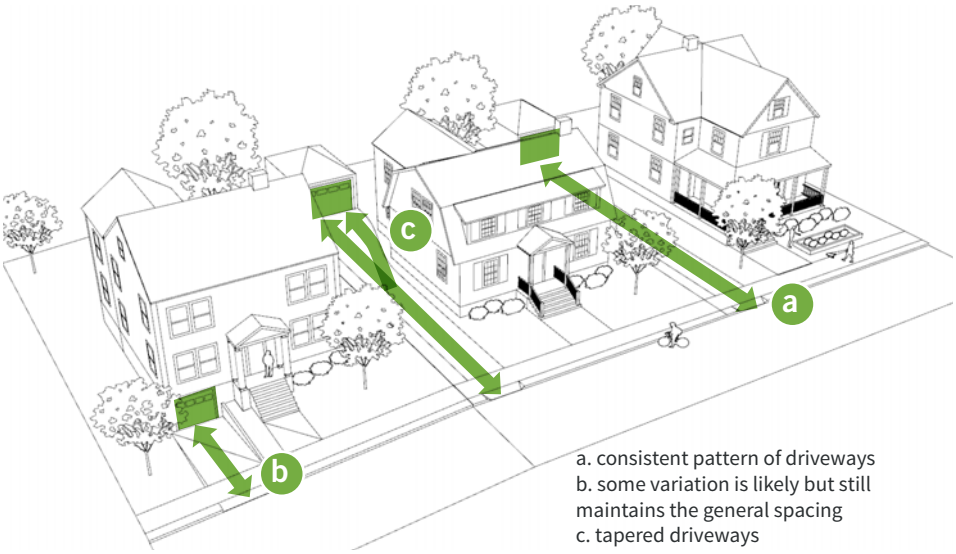
**Encourage**

- Landscaped open space: Ample permeable, landscaped open space to reduce stormwater run-off and heat island effect. Preserve mature trees and replace trees to add tree canopy for shading.
- Minimize impermeable spaces: where possible, such as efficient driveways and parking areas. Limit use of hardscaping in setback areas.
- Sustainable practices and low-maintenance alternatives to lawns: Alternatives to lawns such as ornamental grasses add texture and reduce maintenance costs. Consider a diverse mix of native plants for pollinators.

# **Principle A-3:** Street-facing design elements should enhance or improve the existing streetscape.

## Driveways, curb cuts, and garages should be as unobtrusive as possible.

*See (6.1.10.A) for zoning requirements on residential off-street parking regulations.*




a. consistent pattern of driveways
b. some variation is likely but still maintains the general spacing
c. tapered driveways

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Google Streetview.*

### Encourage

- Rhythm: Match the existing pattern and spacing of driveways.
- Minimal driveways: Reduce width to one-car wide driveways and curb cuts. Use landscaping to buffer between driveway and neighbors.
- Rear garages: Place garages in the rear yard and partially screened from the street.
- Garage doors and detailing: For highly visible garages, use garage doors with built-in windows and architectural details such as outdoor wall light fixtures or planters.
- Entrance elements: Emphasize the entrance for people over parking.

### Discourage

- Wide driveways: Wider than one-car.
- Excessive slopes: Slopes exceeding 15%.

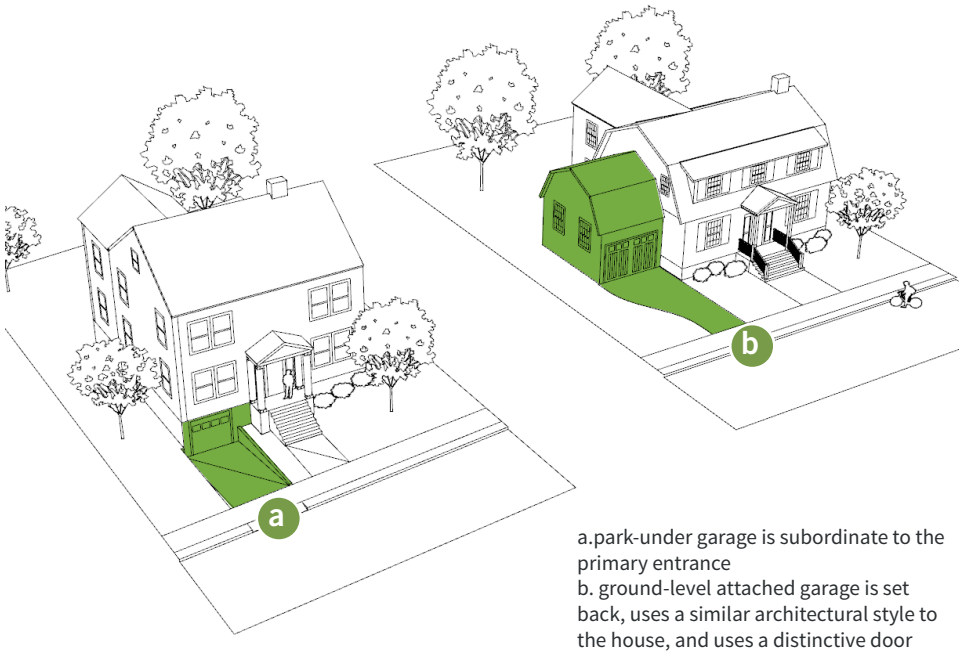
### Block-Specific Recommendations

- Two-Family Lot Category: Instead of street-facing garages, consider whether a side yard driveway without a rear garage would work.
- Small Lot Category: On some streets with narrow lots or difficult topography, a small, non-conforming front yard parking pad may be the only way to fit a parking spot. The parked car should not block the sidewalk. The parking pad should be placed on the side of the house and not block the front entrance. Parking pads should be limited to one car. This would require permission from the ZBA.

# Principle A-3 (continued)

Street-facing design elements should enhance or improve the existing streetscape.

**Attached, street-facing garages tend to dominate the front of the house. Consider other off-street parking solutions first.**




a.park-under garage is subordinate to the primary entrance
b. ground-level attached garage is set back, uses a similar architectural style to the house, and uses a distinctive door

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Google Streetview.*

**Encourage**

- Minimized presence: Set the attached garage back from the front face of the house. Consider differentiating the garage in a smaller side wing to the main house. Size the garage to be one-car wide.
- Bay windows and porches: These elements draw the eye away from the garage.
- Small park-under garages: For park-under garages or garages within the house foundation, avoid adding another story to the house. Match the foundation height of the house to other houses on the street, based on the existing topography.
- Front walkway: Create a dedicated entrance walkway for people separate from the driveway.
- Smaller driveway: Street-facing garages reduce the amount of driveway necessary, when compared with rear garages.

**Discourage**

- Prominent garage doors: Do not put garage door in front or flush with the primary face of the house. Avoid placing the garage door in the center of the house. Consider painting the garage door in a color that is consistent with the palette of other features of the house.
- Wide garage doors: Two-car garages should be split into two bays and two garage doors.

**Principle A-4:** Creative design solutions and exceptions are encouraged to help new houses and renovations with special circumstances and non-conforming lots in a way that is consistent with the Neighborhood Block Category.

## Corner Lots

### Encourage

- Off-street parking: Where possible, driveways and garages located on the smaller street or side of the house without the main entrance.

### Discourage

- Visible mechanicals and blank facades: Mechanicals and blank facades should not be on a public facing side of the house.

Garage and driveway are on secondary street.
*Source: Google Streetview.*

## Non-conforming Lots

### Encourage

- Streetscape Rhythm: Use the existing streetscape rhythm of building spacing.
- Off-street parking: Choose the least disruptive off-street parking design.
- Emphasized front entrance.

These lots are smaller than allowed by zoning. *Source: Google Streetview.*

# Principle A-4 (continued)

Creative design solutions and exceptions are encouraged to help new houses and renovations with special circumstances and non-conforming lots in a way that is consistent with the Neighborhood Block Category.

## Steep Topography

### Encourage

- Consistent heights: Follow existing foundation height pattern of the street.
- Step backs: Step down where appropriate to not overshadow neighbors at a lower elevation.
- Park-under Garages: If applicable, minimize the visibility of park-under garages.
- Retaining wall: For large retaining walls, if possible, use or replicate similar material and styling to neighboring houses.
- Break up vertical plane: A house can be zoning-compliant but still appear to be nearly four stories relative to neighbors (exposed foundation, two stories, and roof dormer) Use architectural breaks such as a deck, treatment, or step back to limit the visual appearance of the house on a higher slope relative to abutters or the sidewalk.

### Discourage

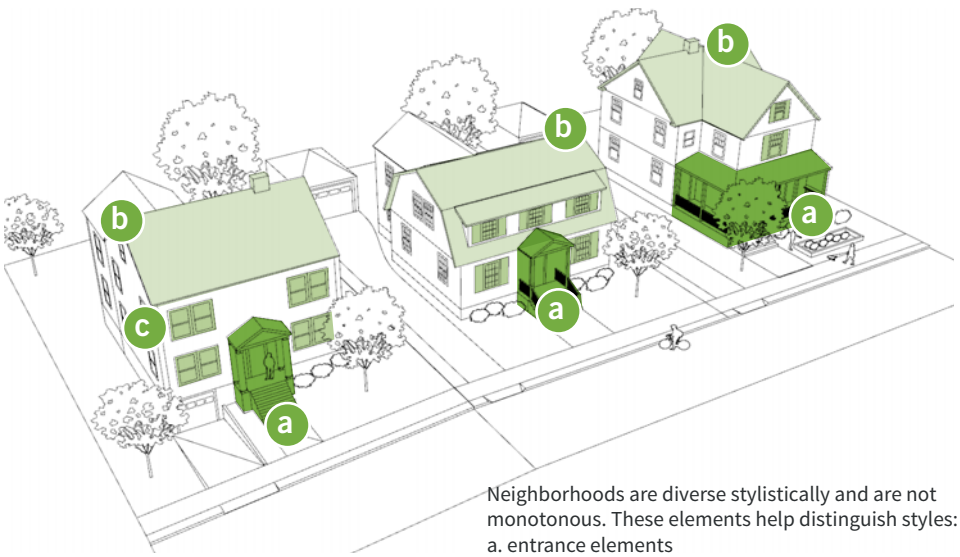
- Dramatic differences in height: Excessive appearance of height, relative to neighbors.

Use a consistent foundation height that matches the pattern of other houses on the street. *Source: Google Streetview.*

The foundation height of this house greatly exceeds the house's neighbors due to the attached garage. *Source: Harriman.*

# **Principle B-1:** Arlington's residential neighborhoods are made up of a range of architectural styles. Borrow and reference styles strategically.

Because Arlington developed over time, its neighborhoods consist of diverse architectural styles. While there is no "ideal" style, new houses are encouraged to reference the proportions and styles of existing houses on the same block. New houses should draw from the rich architectural history of Arlington and avoid a plain exterior or overly-complex design. This section is a brief catalogue of Arlington's common architectural styles.




Neighborhoods are diverse stylistically and are not monotonous. These elements help distinguish styles:
a. entrance elements
b. roofline styles and roof pitch
c. window styles and proportions

Reference existing elements from other houses on the street. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Avoid oversimplifying elements and using the wrong proportions. *Source: Bobvila.*

### Encourage

- Consistent style: Observe which styles help define the streetscape. Borrow elements but do not be afraid of introducing new styles and ideas.
- Details: Include appropriate details to create a cohesive design.
- New styles: For a new house in a style not yet on the block, try to reference the proportions of doors, windows, roof pitch, roof types, and other building elements to match the scale of the existing neighborhood. See Principle C-1 for more information on types of building elements.
- Consistent additions and renovations: Match the style of the existing house. But in some cases, a well-designed contemporary-style side or rear addition can complement the proportions of the main house.

### Discourage

- Plain faces or over-simplification: Focus details on visible parts of the house, such as the front. In renovations, avoid covering up or over-simplifying previous detailing work.
- Too many styles: Do not over-complicate the design and mix too many different styles.
- Uniformity: For subdivisions or multiple houses, consider differentiating houses through details and color.

# Principle B-1 (continued)

Arlington's residential neighborhoods are made up of a range of architectural styles. Borrow and reference styles strategically.

## Colonial-Revival

- Very common and found throughout Arlington.
- Most were built during Arlington's growth spurt as a streetcar suburb.
- Sub-categories include Georgian, Federalist Colonial styles. Farmhouse/cottage is related, typified by large front porches.

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Zillow.*

## Dutch Colonial-Revival

- Common and frequently found around Arlington Heights.
- Easily identifiable by its second-story Gambrel roof and dormers.

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Google Streetview.*

## Cape

- Common and frequently found around Arlington Heights.
- Small footprint, 1 1/2 stories, single gabled roof.
- Many have been added onto over the years, including dormers, side additions and rear additions.

*Source: Harriman.*

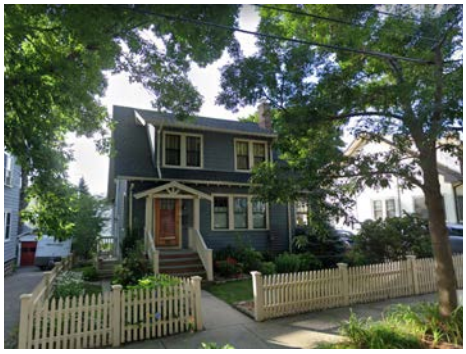
*Source: Harriman.*

# Principle B-1 (continued)

## Bungalow

- Less common.
- Mostly Craftsman-style but some are Colonial.
- 1 1/2-story with full, partial, or enclosed front porches. Square, tapered columns. Low-pitched gable roof with shed dormer.

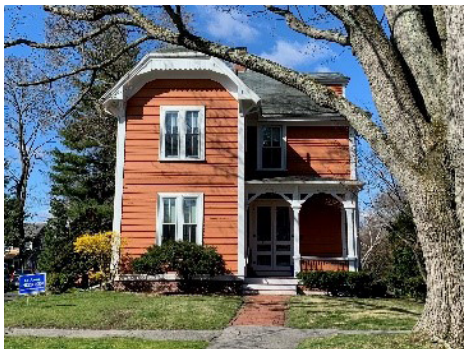
*Source: Design Review Working Group (DRWG).*



*Source: Google Streetview.*

## Victorian

- Less common.
- Asymmetric. Generally ornamented. Complex, asymmetric houses. Steeply-pitched roofs. Projecting elements such as porches and bay windows.



*Source: Design Review Working Group (DRWG).*

*Source: Wikimedia.*

## Tudor-Inspired

- Less common
- Inspired by English medieval styles.
- Decorative half-timbering and steeply pitched roofs. Prominent chimney or arched wing wall.

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Google Streetview.*

# Principle B-1 (continued)

## Ranch

- Somewhat common and found in Morningside and Poet's Corner.
- Low-sloped roofs and simple massing. Includes both 2-story Raised Ranch and 1-story Ranch houses.
- Attached side garage or park-under garage in foundation.

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Google Streetview.*

## Contemporary, Modern

- Rare.
- Diverse and evolving style that draws inspiration from modernism and sustainable construction methods. Generally combines different geometric volumes.

*Source: Google Streetview.*

*Source: Design Review Working Group (DRWG).*

## New Traditional

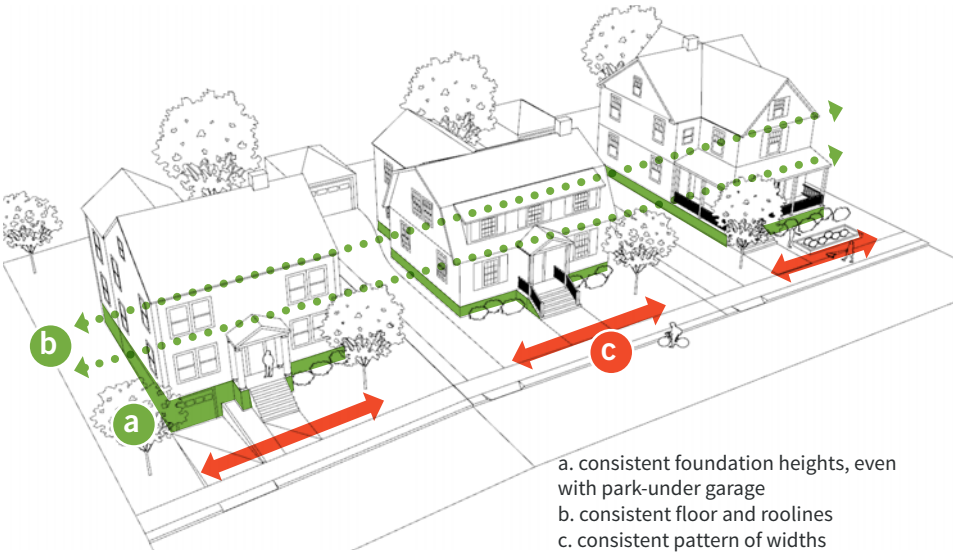
- Refers to new homes that borrow elements from historical styles.
- Strong examples closely resemble the proportions and details of historical styles while using new materials.
- Weaker examples have prominent front-facing garage, shallow porches, blank side walls with no windows, and improperly proportioned roofs and details.

*Source: Design Review Working Group (DRWG).*

*Source: Design Review Working Group (DRWG).*

# **Principle B-2:** Creative design solutions are encouraged to ensure new houses are consistent or compatible with the streetscape's rhythm.

## General Guidelines for New Construction




a. consistent foundation heights, even with park-under garage
b. consistent floor and roolines
c. consistent pattern of widths

Uses the primary massing of a Cape and adds setback elements such as the garage as side wings. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Oversimplified front facade. Windows are optimized for the interior but seem disorganized. *Source: Zilow.*

### Encourage

- Consistent foundation heights: Match the height of the foundation and front entrance to other houses on the street, especially for houses with garages in the foundation.
- Consistent scale and width: Match the scale and width of other houses on the street on a similar lot size.
- Break up long sections: For houses with more street frontage than neighboring houses, break up the massing with side wings that are set back from the primary front façade.
- Appropriate roof size: Roof and dormers should not add significant appearance of height beyond two stories. See 'Principle C-1 – Roofs and Dormers' for more detailed strategies on ½ stories, roofs, and dormers.

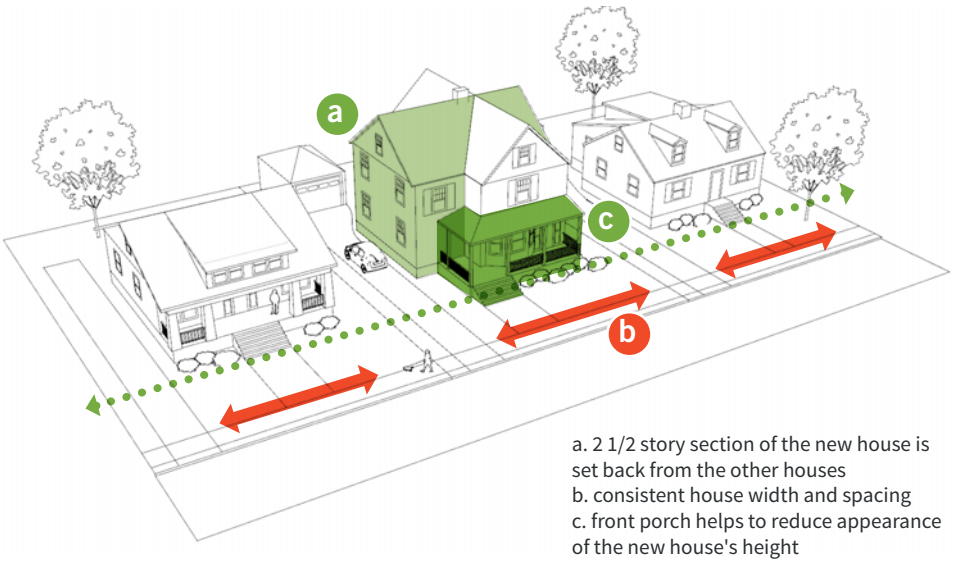
### Discourage

- Inside-out design: When designing from the inside, also take care to design the exterior composition. Designing houses from the "inside-out" often results in an attractive interior but unfocused and distracting exterior with poorly placed windows.
- Dramatic foundation height differences: Avoid dramatic differences in height between first floor and street level, especially for houses with garages in the foundation.
- Wide front face: Avoid wide houses without breaking the massing apart, especially ones with a ground-level attached garage.

# Principle B-2 (continued)

Creative design solutions are encouraged to ensure new houses are consistent or compatible with the streetscape's rhythm.

## Additional Guidelines for New Construction in Single-family, Small Lot Blocks




a. 2 1/2 story section of the new house is set back from the other houses
b. consistent house width and spacing
c. front porch helps to reduce appearance of the new house's height

This new house, though it is taller, matches the spacing of the existing pattern of Cape houses. *Source: Harriman.*

Consider side and rear additions that preserve the form of the existing Cape instead of replacement. *Source: DRWG.*

### Encourage

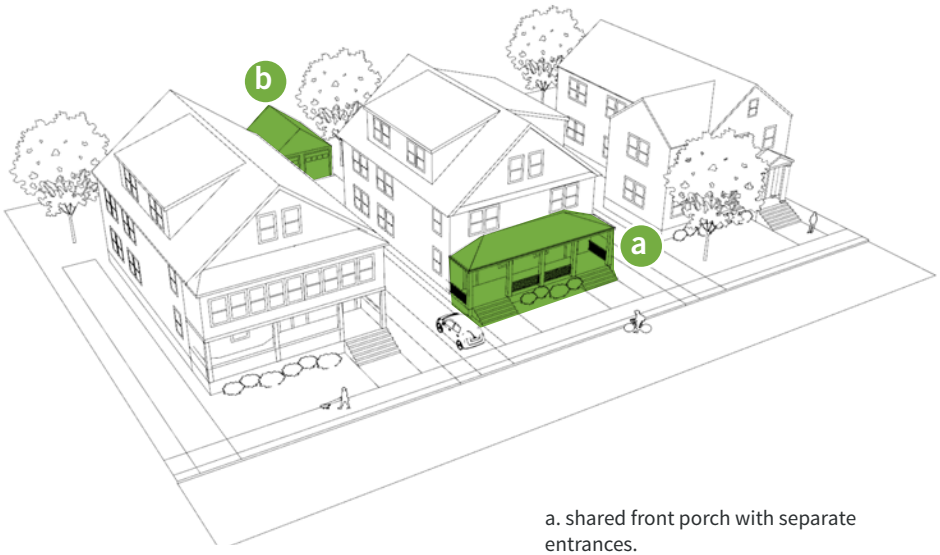
- Entrance elements: Elements such as covered, usable front porches and stoops can help to reduce the appearance of height. Usable front porches refers to a porch with sufficient depth and length to place furniture such as a bench or chairs.
- Half-stories: Consider using a half-story such as dormers and the roof space to add additional space instead of a full story.
- Human-scaled details: Elements such as a first floor eave line or first floor public facing projection (e.g., porch) create better human-scaled connections to the street.

### Discourage

- Dramatic foundation height differences: Avoid dramatic differences in height between first floor and street level, especially for houses with garages in the foundation or basement.
- Dramatic height differences: Avoid dramatic differences in height between neighboring houses, particularly in relation to Capes and Bungalows.

# Principle B-2 (continued)

## Additional Guidelines for New Construction in Two-Family Blocks




a. shared front porch with separate entrances.
b. rear, shared garage

Consider using shared front porches to de-emphasize parking. Note this particular example is a single-family house. *Source: DRWG.*

Consider pairing a larger unit with a smaller unit, either to the side or rear, to break the massing apart. *Source: DRWG.*

Consider a "stacked" two-family house rather than a side-by-side townhouse. Note that this particular house is a single-family house. *Source: DRWG.*

Avoid prominent front driveways and disrupting the pattern of front yards. *Source: Google Streetview.*

### Encourage

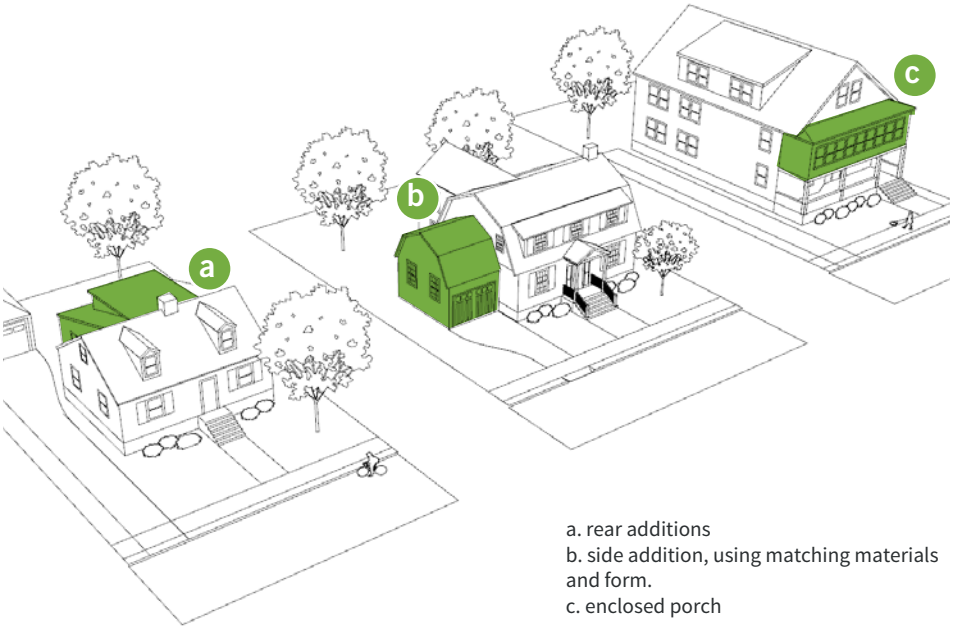
- Townhouse hybrids: For new side-by-side townhouses or duplexes, consider breaking up the house to distinguish the two units. Consider creating a larger unit paired with a smaller unit. For corner lots, entrances of the two units can be on separate streets.
- Shared spaces: Include welcoming, usable front porches if possible, especially if surrounding houses have a pattern of shared porches.

### Discourage

- Double-car garages in the front: Double-car, front-facing garages for each unit can dominate the primary façade.

# **Principle B-3:** New additions are encouraged to match or complement the style of the original structure and match the rhythm of other houses on the street.

## Additions, Side Additions, and Rear Additions




a. rear additions
b. side addition, using matching materials and form.
c. enclosed porch

The side addition to this Dutch Colonial is smaller and matches the style of the existing house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

This side addition overtakes the original house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

### Definition

Additions are an attached extension to add more living space to an existing house.

### Encourage

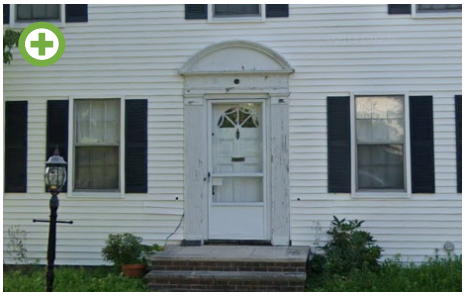
- Matching materials: Use similar materials, level of detailing, windows, and other elements to the original structure.
- Smaller size: Size the additions to appear smaller or subordinate to the existing building.
- Side addition strategies: Side additions can be very visible to the street. Match the spacing of the original house's windows and bays to break up the massing. If matching materials and detailing is cost prohibitive, set the addition back from the existing house further to reduce its prominence.
- Rear additions: Rear additions are less visible from the street. While matching detailing and materials would be ideal, the rear can be a lower priority. "L-shape" rear additions wider than the original structure should be set far enough from the street.

### Discourage

- Over-sized additions.
- Plain additions that do not match the style and quality of the existing building.
- Large side additions that are flush with or projected in front of the primary face of the house. Side additions with blank facades.

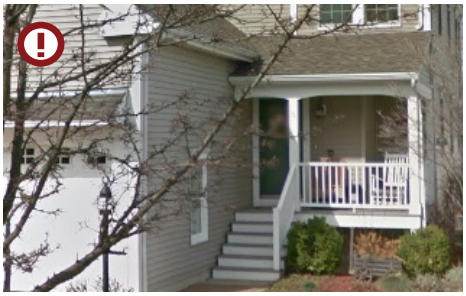
# **Principle C-1:** Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

## Main Entrance, Porches, Stoops, and Porticos



Pediment over pilaster. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Double porch. *Source: Google Streetview.*



While the porch helps, the entrance is set very far behind the garage. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Contemporary entryway. *Source: Google Streetview.*

New Traditional Colonial Portico. *Source: Harriman.*

Two-story entryways generally call too much attention to the house and make it seem larger. *Source: Google Streetview.*

### Definition

- A stoop is a small staircase ending in a platform and leading to the entrance.
- A pediment over pilasters is an ornamental archway with columns that projects from the wall and highlights the front entrance.
- A portico is a small, covered structure that leads to the entrance, typically supported by columns.
- A porch is a covered outdoor area attached to the front of the house or wraps around the house.

### Encourage

- Obvious entrance: In most cases, entrances should face the street. A pedestrian pathway should link the entrance and sidewalk, instead of a driveway.
- Entrance elements: Stoops, pediments, and porticos can help highlight the front entrance and add interest to the front façade. Porches should be deep enough to be usable as a furnished space.
- Detailing: Use appropriately sized columns, railings, and trimmings around doors, windows, and roofs.

### Discourage

- Obscured or under-sized entrances.
- Oversized, two-story entrances.
- Inconsistent entrances: Entrance elements help to establish a pattern of front doors on the streetscape. Disrupting the pattern can call unwanted attention to the new house. For example, if there is a defined pattern of porches or stoops, the new house should match the positioning and style of the entrance and avoid introducing something completely new.

# Principle C-1 (continued)

Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

## Roof and Rooflines

Window trim meets the bottom of the roof without a big gap. *(Source: Google Streetview)*

Example of a simple but effective eave return. *(Source: This is Carpentry)*

Gable roof with corner turret and dormers. *(Source: Google Streetview)*

Gap between second-story windows and roofs could be reduced with use of trim at windows and under eaves.. *(Source: Google Streetview)*

"Pork chop" eaves, steep return caps, or abrupt ends to the returns are less desirable details. *(Source: This is Carpentry)*

Complex combination of gable roofs and low-pitched roof with high eaves makes house appear taller. *(Source: Harriman)*

### Definition

Roofline and roof detailing make up a prominent aspect of the house. Additional detail on roof types can be found in the glossary.

### Encourage

- Appropriately sloped roofs: New roofs should be compatible with the rooflines of surrounding houses, with the appearance of under 2-1/2 stories. The hat (roof) should sit just above the eyes (windows or window trim). The roof at the second floor should come to the top of the window or window trim instead of leaving a big gap.
- Organized roof design: Use a minimal approach and do not mix too many styles of roof forms. Secondary eaves at porches and lower projections can reduce the perception of height.
- Roof detailing: Where appropriate, use well-proportioned trimming to detail eaves, the "roof return", and how the roof meets the walls of the house. Refer to the Reference for more resources on best practices.

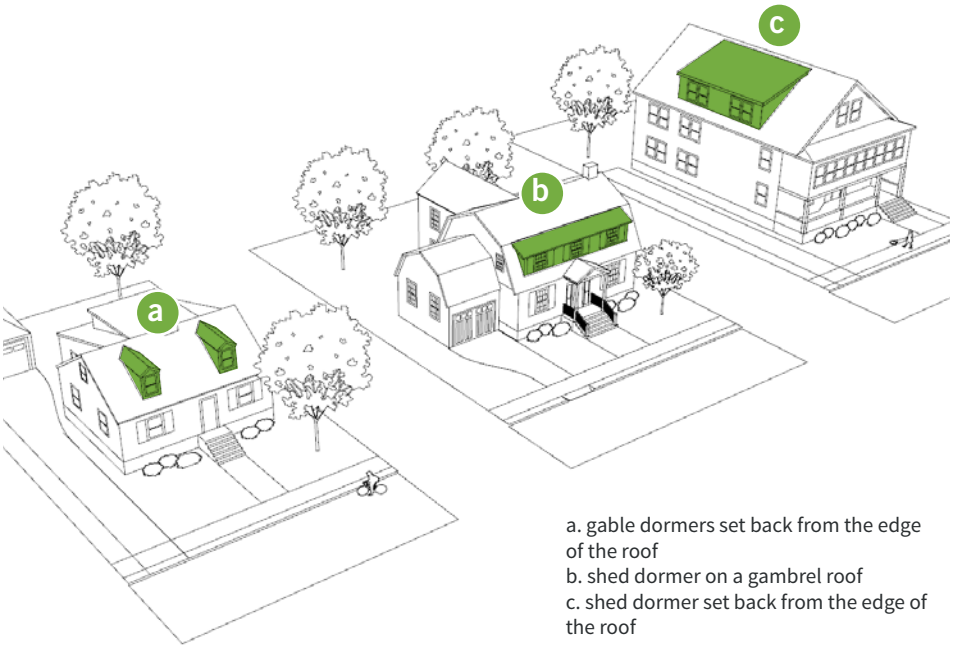
### Discourage

- Overly complex roofs: These roofs add the appearance of unnecessary bulk and height. Roofs should join together simply, without an extra bulge protruding from the primary roof line.
- Lack of detailing: Poorly designed details, such as large, obvious "porkchop eaves", can look bulky and call unwanted attention to the new house.
- Disproportionate Size: Low-pitch gable roofs with high eaves make the house seem taller when the eave is high.

# Principle C-1 (continued)

Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

## Dormers and other Roof Elements




a. gable dormers set back from the edge of the roof
b. shed dormer on a gambrel roof
c. shed dormer set back from the edge of the roof

Dormers are set back from roof and are barely visible from street. *Source: Google Streetview.*

While the height is not excessive, the dormer is too large relative to the house. *Source: Google Streetview.* `

### Definition

A dormer is a roofed structure that projects vertically beyond the plane of a pitched roof. It usually has a window or multiple windows and is used to increase usable space in the attic or roof space. Two common types of dormers are gable and shed.

Other roof elements include chimneys and other defining features of certain styles, such as turrets.

### Encourage

- Well-proportioned dormer: Dormers should be a detail on the roof rather than the dominant feature.
- Consistent dormer types: Use similar dormer types and level of detailing to dormers on surrounding houses, if applicable. Match dormer type to roof type and pitch.
- Setback from the roof: To reduce their appearance, dormers, especially larger shed dormers, should be set back. Existing eave line to remain continuous. Small wall dormers are acceptable to be flush with the front wall.
- Dormer alignment: Line up dormers and windows with existing elements on the wall below.

### Discourage

- Large dormers: Inconsistent dormers can disrupt the streetscape pattern. Dormers should not occupy more than half the width of the roof.
- Inconsistent dormer types: Multiple, conflicting styles of dormers.
- Undersized windows: Small windows and lack of detailing on dormers can create too much blank space. Windows should extend from the top to bottom of the dormer.

# Principle C-1 (continued)

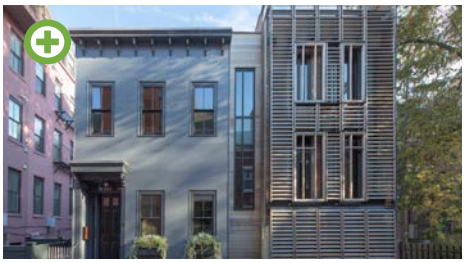
Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

## Windows

Windows do not necessarily align vertically but are ordered and symmetric. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Window combines contemporary finishes and materials with traditional proportions. *Source: Zillow.*

Ground floor lacks windows, and other windows appear oddly proportioned. *Source: Google Streetview.*



Windows are inspired by neighborhood window styles but use contemporary finishes. *Source: Dezeen.*

Blank side face with no windows. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Windows are not ordered or aligned in a logical fashion. *Source: Google Streetview.*

### Definition

Windows let natural light into the house. From the outside, they add visual interest and make the house look more inviting from the street.

### Encourage

- Consistent window proportions and composition: Establish a clear logic for the placement of windows of varying sizes and design, using the surrounding houses as a guide. Windows on adjacent floors should relate to each other in some way.
- Window distribution: All sides of the house should have windows, keeping in mind existing pattern of window spacing.
- Sustainable practices: Energy-efficient strategies to use better insulating windows, better natural daylighting, and better solar orientation.
- Detailing: Attractive detailing and trimming when appropriate, such as multi-pane windows, that is compatible with surrounding buildings on prominent windows facing the street. Use similar materials to the windows of surrounding buildings.

### Discourage

- Complex window combinations: Too many window styles, haphazardly placed.
- Blank façades: Significant areas without windows.
- Oversimplified window style: Overly plain windows may not fit the style of the house and surrounding buildings. For example, un-detailed, single-pane, punched windows generally do not fit many traditional styles.
- Inconsistent window style: Overly ornate windows may not fit the style of the house and surrounding buildings.

# Principle C-1 (continued)

Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

## Architectural Detailing and Materials

Shutters are sized closely with the window size. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Multiple materials are used but in a way that is consistent with the style of the house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Front-facing garage matches seamlessly in style and material with the house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Shutters are purely decorative and do not appear 'functional.' *Source: Google Streetview.*

Multiple materials are used, but it is obvious that the stone material is merely "stuck on." *Source: Google Streetview.*

Plain garage doors are fine in the rear but not in a prominent front area. *Source: Google Streetview.*

### Definition

The right level of detailing and material selection help to add texture and visually organize the front façade to reduce the bulkiness of a new house.

### Encourage

- Consistent proportions, materials, and detailing: Use and size detailing and materials that are appropriate to the style of the house. Use proportions inspired by surrounding buildings.
- Differing materials, when appropriate: Different materials, particularly between the basement/foundation and the rest of the house, can help define different parts of the house and break up the front façade.
- Continuity of character: Wrap veneers and use detailing on all sides of the house, so materials do not appear "stuck on."
- Detailing on garages: Use detailing to make front-facing, attached garage doors consistent with the rest of the front of the house and not appear as a blank void (see more on attached garages in Principle A-3)

### Discourage

- Unsuccessful detailing: Under-sized or over-sized detailing adds too much visual complexity and draws unnecessary attention to the house. Avoid a single plane of the same siding material in an unbroken plane from the basement to roof.
- Complex material combinations: Too many conflicting materials or colors draws unnecessary attention to the house. For example, stone, brick, colorful siding, and contrasting trimming would likely conflict. Use details and different materials with restraint.


1884 Aerial map of Arlington.

# 2 Existing Conditions Analysis

Working Group members discuss the elements that make up a newer duplex built in East Arlington.

**To strengthen each neighborhood's sense of place, future developments need to be designed in response to their surroundings. At the heart of the Guidelines is an understanding of what characteristics shape each of Arlington's many neighborhoods. The Existing Conditions Analysis describes Arlington's many neighborhoods and the different housing typologies that help to define the neighborhoods.**

In the early to mid-20th century, Arlington developed into a streetcar suburb in the Boston area. Today, it is a densely developed, vibrant town seeing increased interest in redevelopment in its many low-density residential neighborhoods.

**Key Questions**

The Existing Conditions Analysis seeks to understand the following:

- What are the different neighborhoods in Arlington and what urban design factors give them their unique sense of place?
- Many residents are concerned that recent constructions are oversized and do not fit the context; is this actually true and what is the root cause of this issue, from both a regulatory and design perspective?

**Methodology**

The Existing Conditions Analysis first outlines the key design issues and patterns of residential redevelopment that impact the identity of a neighborhood.

Next, the Analysis uses mapping and an architectural typology inventory to better understand the factors that differentiate the neighborhoods from each other. The Existing Conditions Analysis will then propose "fuzzy" boundaries for different neighborhoods based on community feedback and data.

Finally, the Analysis reviews the current zoning regulations and review process to better understand how a Design Review would be added to the existing process.

**The population grew 6.6% to 45,624 Residents since 2010.**

**59% of Arlington's 18,600 households owned their homes.**

**The median value of owner-occupied housing was $609,800.**

**The median household income was $107,085.**

*Source: US Census, ACS 2018.*

# 2.1 Existing Patterns and Concerns

**Many residents say that many of the newly built homes and renovations do not fit in their context. Demand for more living space, the need for garage space, and a lack of clarity about best design practices have led to new construction that feels out of scale with the rest of the neighborhood.**


Heat Map of permitting data in Arlington from 2010 - 2017

Recently, property owners and developers have been replacing or renovating much of Arlington's housing inventory that was built before 1970. While household size has decreased in the Boston region, the average size of Arlington's houses has increased. The median size of a single-family house in Arlington is 1,846 sf, but the median size of a newly-built single-family house in Arlington between 2010 and 2020 is 3,446 sf. As housing prices rise, homeowners and developers are incentivized to replace existing, smaller houses on large lots with much larger homes.

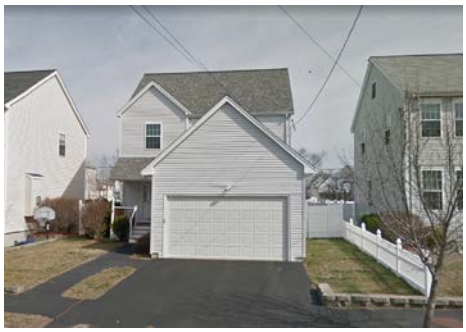
Furthermore, much of Arlington was developed as a streetcar suburb, prior to the advent of the car. In 2017, 61 percent of commuters drove alone, compared to 20 percent of commuters who took transit. Most households own one or even multiple cars to get around. Arlington, in most cases, does not allow overnight street parking for residents. The combination of these two factors means that most homes need off-street parking spaces, even if the original lots were not designed to accommodate parking.

These trends have resulted in new housing that is designed for a very different lifestyle than the current neighborhood fabric. The challenge inherent in this project is to create design guidelines that allow families to adapt their homes but also to ensure new homes are designed to fit their context.

## Residential Design Concerns Overview

Oversized shed dormers on gable roof effectively create three-story houses; South Boston, MA.
*Source: Google Streetview.*

Large home with many elements; Lexington, MA.
*Source: Google Streetview.*



Garage on a "snout house"; Medford, MA.
*Source: Google Streetview.*

### Lack of clarity and consistency in design

Many renovations, visible from the street, can cause an updated home to appear more massive or out of place with the neighborhood. A new, oversized dormer can add the appearance of significant height, effectively transforming a two-and-one-half-story house into a three-story house. Mismatched rooflines and other additions that do not fit the architectural language of the existing buildings can also create the appearance of significant massing.

### More living space, bigger houses

New houses are often built to their maximum zoning envelope or built to the maximum height and setbacks allowed by zoning. Attached garages and site topography have also pushed living space further above the street, creating houses that seem significantly larger than their neighbors.

### Parking that dominates the principal facade

New houses are required by zoning to include off-street parking. Narrow lots prevent many houses from including side driveways and a rear, detached garage.

One solution has been the "park-under"; while the typology is common even in older homes, the average garage door width has increased. Side-by-side town homes also require two driveways and often place them side-by-side, further emphasizing the garage. Recent updates to maximum driveway slopes and counting driveway spaces as off-street spaces have helped mitigate some of these issues.

*Note: Examples from other communities were used to protect privacy of Arlington residents.*

# 2.2 Defining Arlington's Neighborhoods

**Arlington is made up of several unique neighborhoods. The diverse styles of houses create unique neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are distinguished by their development history, urban design, and layout.**

The way Arlington residents describe their neighborhoods differs greatly from the blunt dimensional requirements in zoning. While most of Arlington is zoned as either R0, R1, and R2, the areas within these zoning districts can vary greatly, depending on the neighborhood. Achieving more responsive and comprehensive residential urban design guidelines requires a more fine-grained understanding of Arlington's many neighborhoods.

Many of the names and boundaries of neighborhoods exist only in each resident's mental map. The boundary between East Arlington and Arlington Center will be different for each person. This analysis acknowledges that boundaries are fluid and constantly shifting. Through an analysis of assessor's data and input from the community, these neighborhoods will help shape different sets of guidelines for each neighborhood's collection of housing typologies.

Unlike zoning and its rigid boundaries, the analysis proposes a set of "fuzzy" boundaries to define neighborhoods. Arlington's neighborhoods are filled with diverse housing typologies, so the urban design guidelines provide flexibility to homeowners and designers. The neighborhoods are meant as a guiding, starting point in order to understand the development patterns and building characteristics in each of Arlington's neighborhoods.

The analysis synthesized the following information to create the Neighborhood Map:

- Assessor's data, including year built, lot size, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and Exterior Style
- Community input and "mental maps" provided by DPCD staff and Design Review Working Group members
- Existing maps, including Zoning and other websites


Zoning map of Arlington with Residential Design Guidelines "fuzzy boundaries" overlaid on top.


Morningside
Arlington Center
Russell District
Avon Place District
Broadway District
East Arlington
Jason Heights
Pleasant Street District,
Jason/Grey Street District,
Central Street District
Kelwyn Manor
Miles
0
0.2
0.6
1.0

# 2.3 Neighborhood Attributes

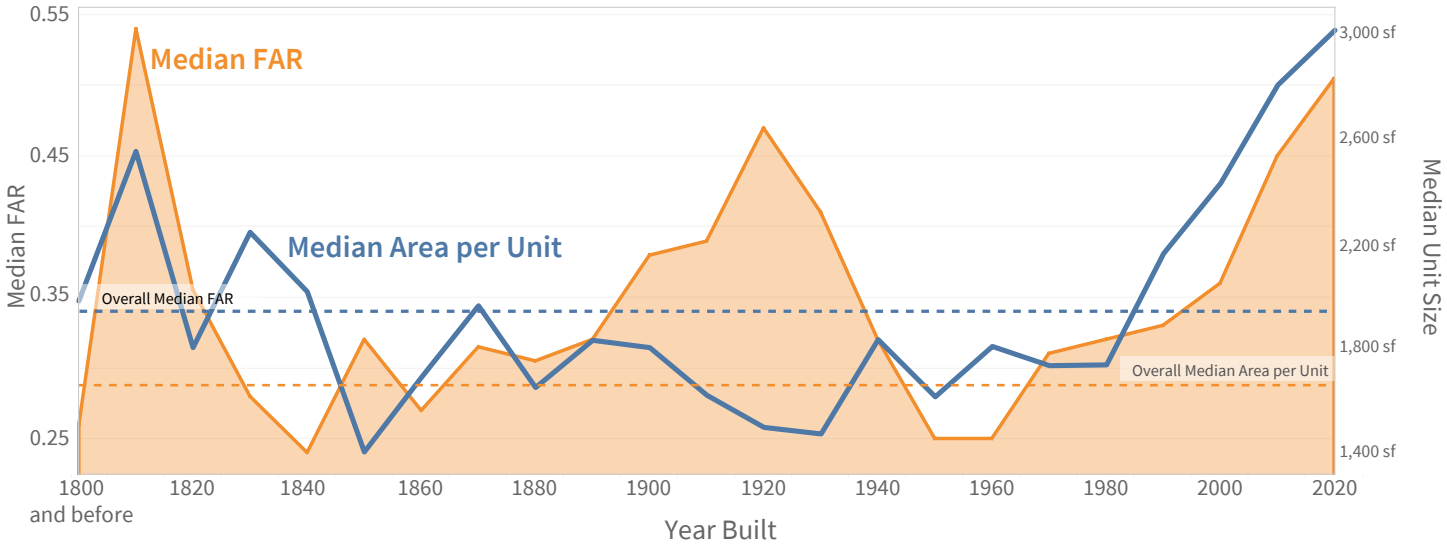
**A neighborhood's sense of place depends on its residents but also the physical characteristics that make up a neighborhood. Elements that help to distinguish different neighborhoods include the history and pattern of development, landmarks and open space, street layout and lot size, architectural styles, and massing.**

To study the different neighborhoods, the existing conditions analysis primarily used 2019 Assessor's data provided by the Town of Arlington and images from site visits, community members, and Google Streetview.

Overall, neighborhoods that have a denser urban fabric were developed earlier. This is mainly because these areas were closest to the original streetcar line on Massachusetts Avenue (East Arlington, Arlington Heights). Neighborhoods that were predominantly developed when car ownership increased aimed to create more space for cars and required larger lots to meet dimensional requirements.

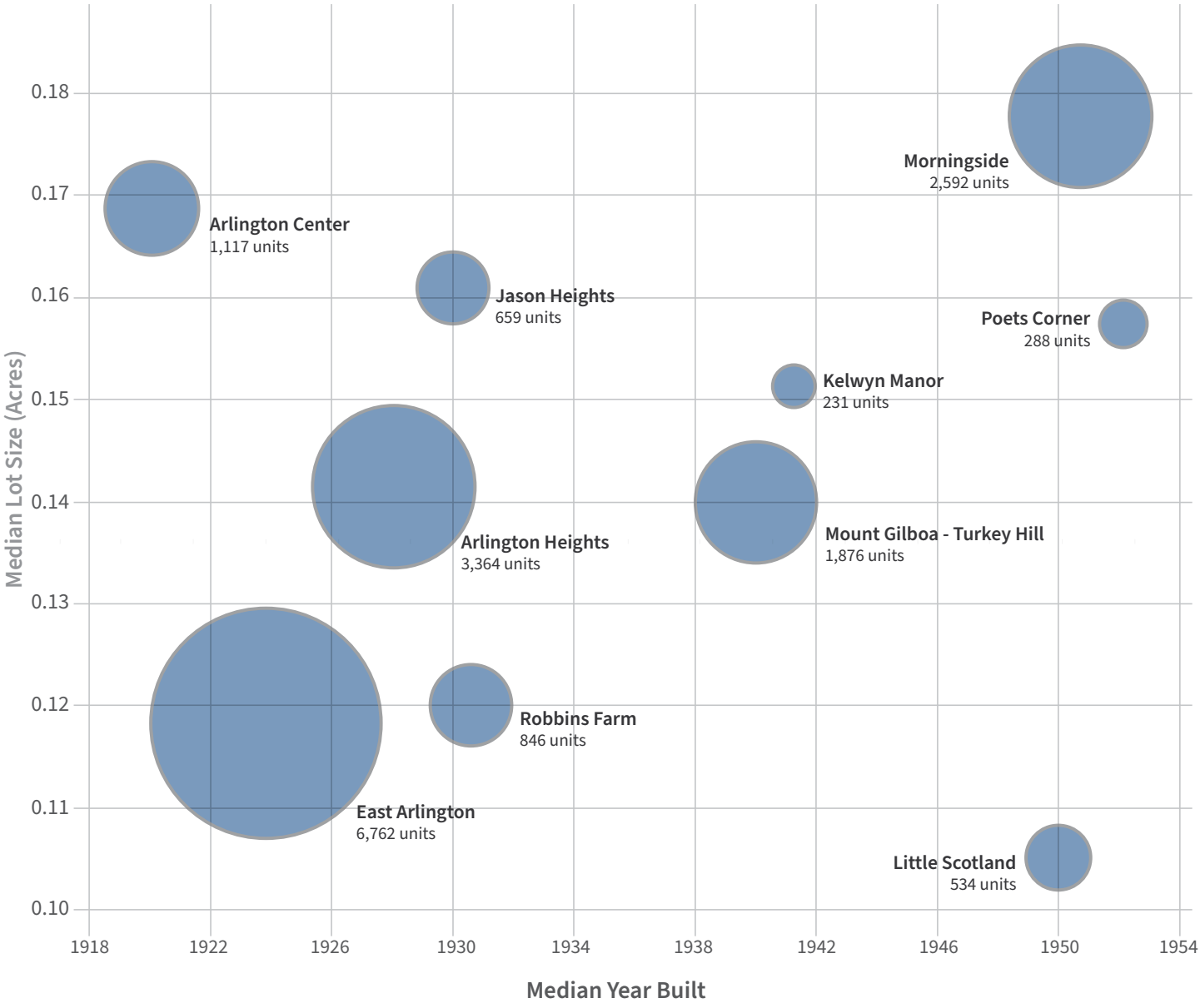
Another key pattern of development is a change of density over time. The median floor area ratio (FAR, calculated by dividing the gross square footage by the lot size), of development increased in the early 20th century as many two-family houses were built. While the total square-footage of development increased, the median area per unit decreased slightly. Recently, the median FAR of new homes has increased due to the increased size of household units.

**Median Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and Median Area per Residential Unit Over Time in Arlington**




Comparison of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of housing and size of residential units over time. Note that in the early 20th-century, denser 2-families with smaller units were being built (High FAR, Small units), but more recently, larger single-family houses are being built (High FAR, Large units).

**Median Lot Size (Acres), Median Year Built, and Number of Units by Neighborhood**




Neighborhoods are plotted by median lot size and median year built. Lot size describes how compact the neighborhood's street layout might be. Generally, older neighborhoods such as East Arlington and Arlington Heights are more compact than more recently developed neighborhoods such as Morningside.

# 2.3 Neighborhood Attributes - History of Development

**Arlington was primarily developed as a streetcar suburb in the 1920s when its population grew by more than 90 percent.**

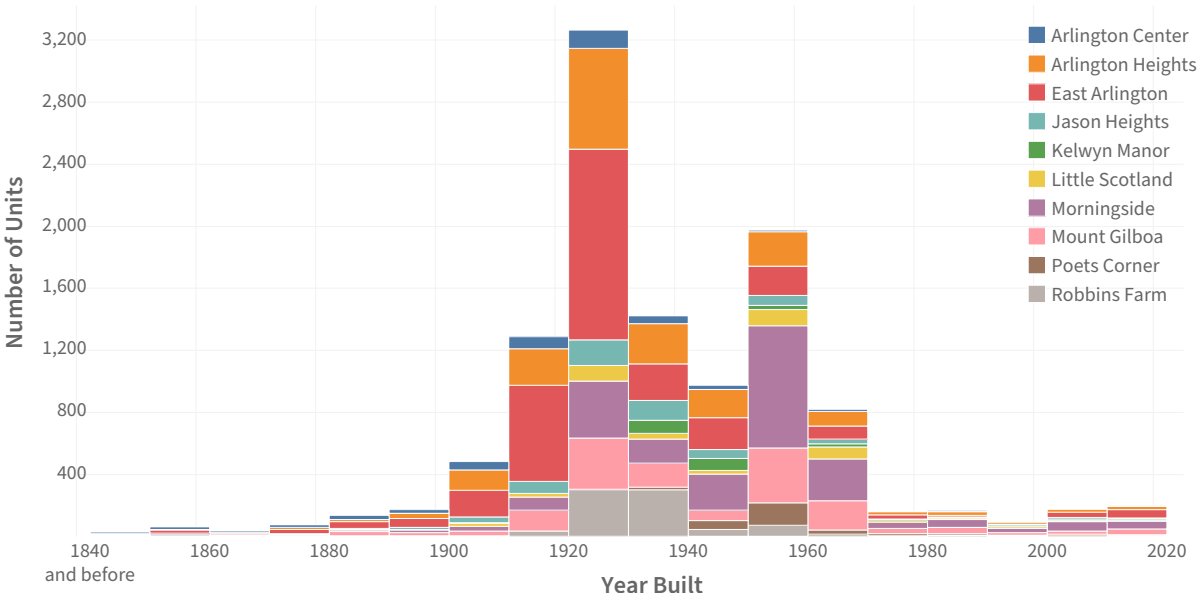
In the 1600's, Arlington was originally called Menotomy, then a rural village and considered part of Cambridge. Colonists built mills along Mill Brook; the Old Schwamb Mill claims to be located on the oldest continuously-used mill site, dating back to about 1684. On the first day of the Revolutionary War, a battle fought in front of the Jason Russell House resulted in 25 colonial casualties.

Most of Arlington was developed during the advent of the streetcar in the early 20th century. East Arlington and Arlington Heights saw the bulk of new homes being built.

The 79 Streetcar went from Harvard Square in Cambridge to Arlington Heights but ended service in 1955. Today, the MBTA 77 bus roughly follows the same route.

When more families could afford cars in post-war America, new subdivisions were built in neighborhoods further from Massachusetts Avenue, such as Morningside. In the 1960s, Arlington expanded many of the multi-family zoning areas in response to higher demand for apartments, and a variety of apartments were built, ranging from smaller 6-8 family "pill boxes" to larger towers. By 1975, after a moratorium, a comprehensive plan and newly recodified zoning bylaw called for more restrictive zoning requirements to protect single-family and two-family homes. Furthermore, more review, such as the Environmental Design Review and Special Permit process, were added to review new multi-family development.[1]

**Year Built of Existing Housing by Neighborhood**




This graph summarizes the year built of current structures that stand today. Note that if an original house was demolished and redeveloped, it would not be included. This does not display permitting data.

1. Hoffman, Alexander Von. Creating and Anti-Growth Regulatory Regime: A Case from Greater Boston, 2006.

The Jason Russell House, a yellow colonial built in 1740. It is the site of an early battle of the American Revolution. *Source: Wikimedia.*

Example of a 'Garrison" Colonial built in the mid-20th century. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Example of a New Traditional colonial-styled house built in the 2010s.


Map of Year Built. Does not include most renovations and additions.

# Summary of Arlington Development and Style History

*Arlington Center, Colonial Revival 1884*

Colonial Revival (1860 - Today)
*Dutch Colonial, Garrison*

*Cutter House, Greek Revival, Federal, 1830*

*Cushman House Queen Anne, 1880s*

Historic Styles “Old Style” (1800 - 1910)
*Stick Victorian, Queen Anne, Federal, Tudor Revival, Second Empire, Greek Revival*

**Menotomy**
**Pre-1806**

Before European settlement, there were significant Native American settlements. Farms and a small commercial center were developed during Colonial times.

**West Cambridge: Country Retreat**
**1807 - 1866**

Transportation improvements link Arlington to Boston. Small-scale industrial operations move in. Genteel country houses were developed near the town center. Many homes built during this period were demolished.

**Early Suburbanization**
**1867 - 1910**

Mills and factories briefly peaked but were replaced by market gardening. Electric railway service was extended throughout town. Farm areas closer to Mass Ave were subdivided for middle-class housing.

*Jason Heights, Dutch Colonial, 1926*

*Jason Heights, Garrison, 1935*

*Turkey Hill, Modern Colonial, 2018*

*Arlington Heights, Cape, 1941*

*Morningside, Ranch, 1965*

Minimal Traditional (1910 - 1950): *Cape, Bungalow*

Ranch, Raised Ranch (1950 - 1970)

*East Arlington, 1924*

*East Arlington, 2016*

Stacked Two-Family (1900 - 1940)

Garden Apartments, Multi-family

Townhouse Two-Family (2000s)

**Accelerated Suburbanization 1911 - 1940**

Farms were sold to be subdivided for dense, single- and multi-family housing to house an increasingly working-class and immigrant population in East Arlington.

**Modernization 1941 - 1970**

Subdivisions of single-family, Colonial-Revival and ranch houses continued to be developed. The automobile becomes even more important as a way to get around. Areas such as Morningside were developed.

**Mature Town 1970 - 2020**

Arlington continues to be a residential-focused town and is largely built out. Small infill development and renovations replace older housing stock.

This timeline is intended for illustrative purposes only. For a more detailed account of Arlington's historic architectural resources, please refer to the Arlington Historic Preservation Survey Master Plan, released in April 2019.

# 2.3 Neighborhood Attributes - Density

**Lot Size and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) are two ways to measure built density. The pattern of massing gives neighborhoods different characters.**

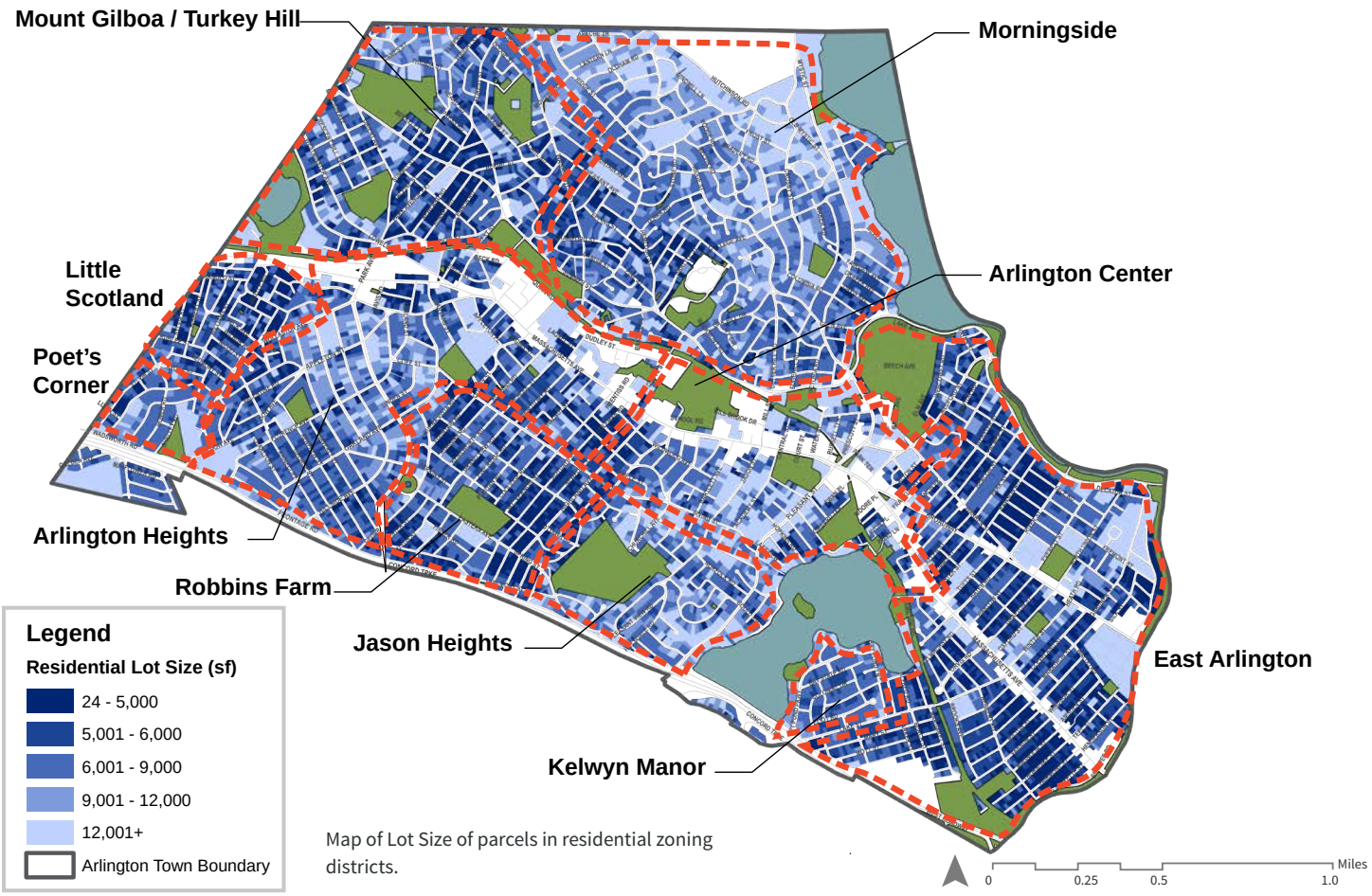
East Arlington and the Massachusetts Avenue Corridor are Arlington's densest neighborhoods. Much of the neighborhood fabric consists of larger two-family houses that are closely spaced together on smaller lots.

Morningside is the least dense as it was mostly developed later and on larger lots. Homes generally have a garage and more spacious yards.

Some historic homes in neighborhoods such as Arlington Heights, Arlington Center, and Jason Heights also have larger lots.

Larger houses on large lots next to smaller houses can cause an abrupt change in the neighborhood fabric.

Larger lots subdivided into smaller lots for the addition of homes, creating another abrupt change between neighborhoods. For example, Little Scotland has a much finer block pattern than the neighboring Arlington Heights.




Map of Lot Size of parcels in residential zoning districts.

Example of two homes located across the street. Larger lots allow for a larger house while smaller lots constrain development due to side and rear yard requirements. *Source: Google Streetview.*

New developments generally are built to their zoning envelope maximum.


Map of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of parcels in residential zoning districts.

# 2.3 Neighborhood Attributes - Style and Typology

**Architectural style is characterized by a building's different elements, massing, and arrangement of elements. Developed over time, each neighborhood consist of a diversity of styles, from small bungalows to grand colonials.**

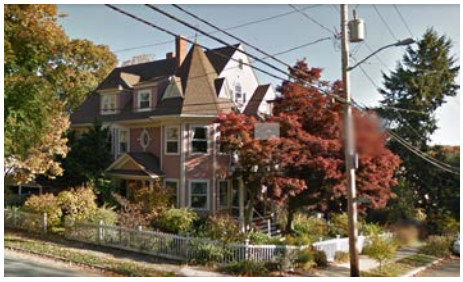
The Assessor's data categorizes homes by exterior style; the analysis consolidated many categories. Much of Arlington's homes take inspiration from Colonial-Revival style. These homes borrow elements common in Colonial homes such as the types of windows, shutters, roof slope, and other decorative elements.

Smaller typologies (Capes, Bungalows) also borrow from the Colonial tradition but are distinct in their smaller massing.

A few other historic, eclectic, or unique style houses (categorized as "Old Style") also are interspersed. These homes borrow elements from movements such as Second Empire, Victorian, and Tudor.

Popular in post-war America, the ranch-style house is the next most common typology. Many of these Ranch homes have low profiles but also borrow common, Colonial decorative elements (e.g., windows).

Example of a Tudor-inspired house. *Source: Google Streetview.*



Example of a Victorian-inspired house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Example of an older Colonial-style house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

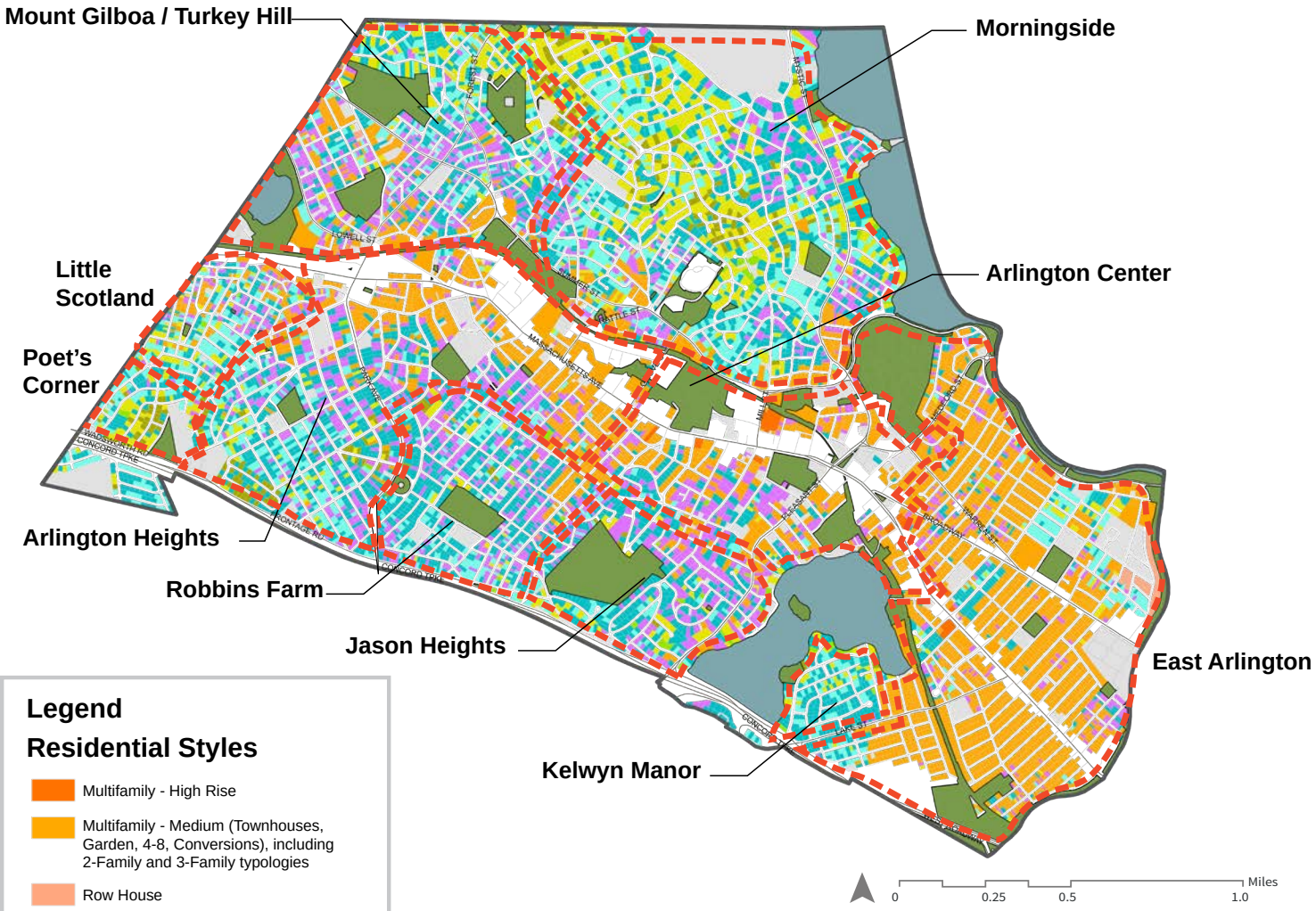
Example of a Dutch-Colonial-style house with gambrel roof. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Example of a one-story Ranch-style house with Colonial elements. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Example of Cape-style houses with Colonial elements. *Source: Harriman.*

Example of a Bungalow-style house. *Source: Google Streetview.*

Example of two-family houses. *Source: Google Streetview.*




Map of exterior style of parcels in residential zoning districts, assigned by Assessors Department.

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - East Arlington

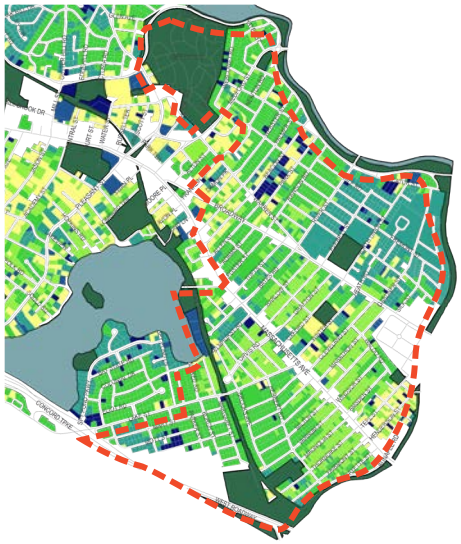
## Dominant Styles
**Two-Family, Multi-family, Old Style, Colonial**

## Year Built, Median
**1924**

## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.49** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

## Lot Size, Median
**5,149 sf** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

East Arlington is Arlington's densest neighborhood and is centered around Broadway and Massachusetts Avenue. Between 1900 and 1924 agriculture yielded to suburban development patterns and East Arlington saw explosive growth. It is a mix of primarily two-family houses and multi-family residential buildings. The housing stock is primarily pre-war with a corner of post-war developments such as Menotomy Manor managed by Arlington Housing Authority to the northeast. Over the past two and one-half decades, East Arlington has seen many condo conversions and the addition of duplexes.



Year Built

Before 1900 1920 1945 1970 2000 2018

Lot Size (square feet)

0 5,000 6,000 9,000 12,000 More than

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

0 0.24 0.31 0.40 0.53 More than

Residential Style

- 2F, 3F, Multi-family (Small-Medium)
- Multi-family (High-rise)
- Row House
- Small Typology (Cape, Bungalow)
- Colonial, Colonial Garrison
- "Old Style", Tudor
- Split level
- 1-story Ranch, Raised Ranch
- Conventional, Contemporary
- Non-residential, Other


Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary







*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - Kelwyn Manor

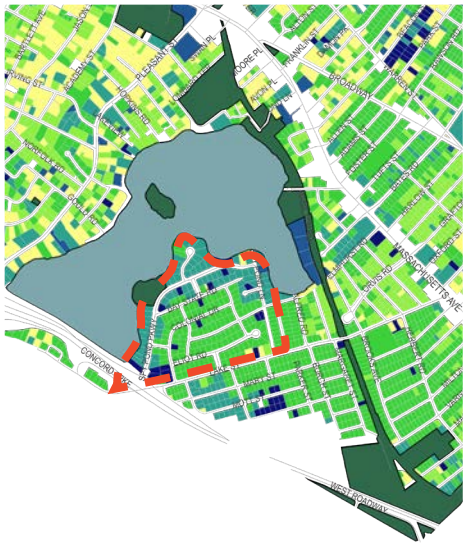
## Dominant Styles
**Colonial, Cape, Ranch**

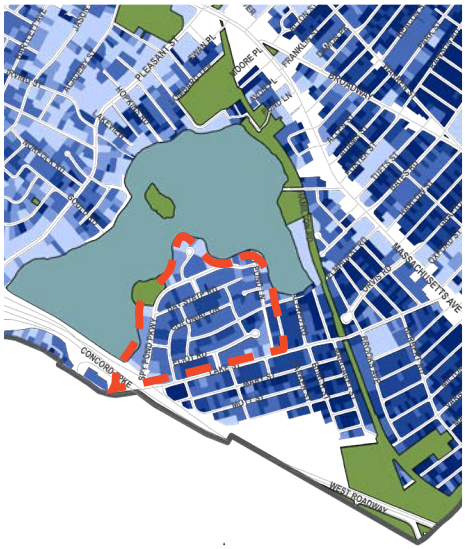
## Year Built, Median
**1941**

## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.29** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

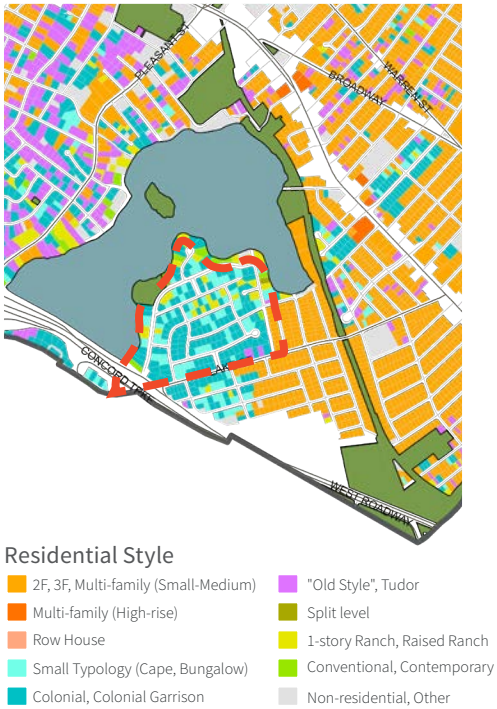
## Lot Size, Median
**6,632 sf** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

Initially developed in 1938 by the Kelly Coal Company, the central core of the neighborhood plan is distinctive in its uniform use of period Colonial Revival style homes. Lots are generally larger and the layout is suburban with a curved grid and cul-de-sac's. Most homes have an attached garage. Some newer homes in the neighborhood are larger, particularly on the edges. The Neighborhood Association maintains a private park along Spy Pond.








Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary







*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - Arlington Center

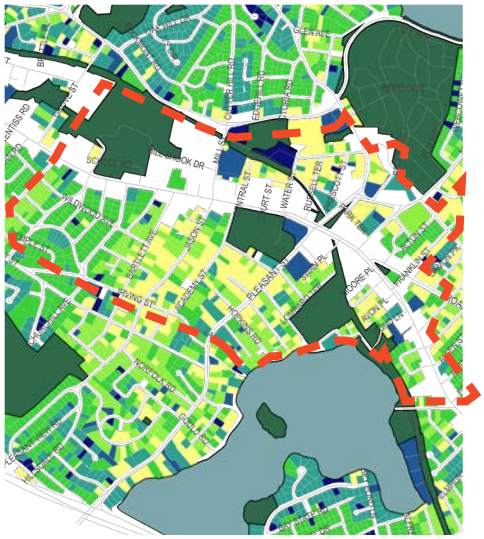
## Dominant Styles
**Old Style, Colonial, Two-Family and Multi-family**

## Year Built, Median
**1920**

## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.37** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

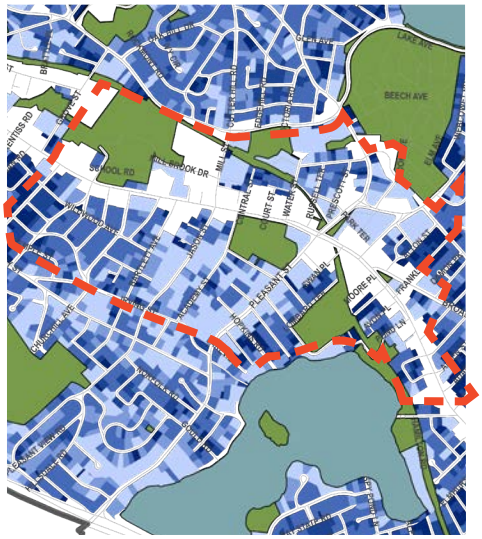
## Lot Size, Median
**7,329 sf** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

Arlington Center is Arlington's main commercial and civic areas. This includes Town Hall and other cultural institutions. The Minuteman Bikeway marks its boundary to the north. At the meeting point of its surrounding neighborhoods, it is a mix of two-family and single-family houses. There are pockets of denser development closer to Massachusetts Avenue, intermixed with commercial uses. Arlington Center also consists of multiple historic districts and historically significant buildings.



Year Built

Before 1900 1920 1945 1970 2000 2018

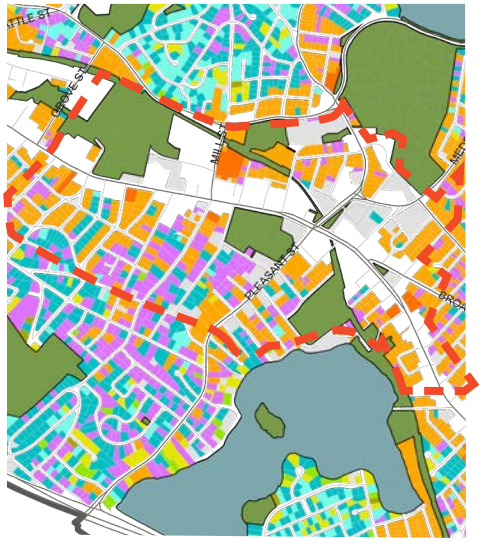


Lot Size (square feet)

0 5,000 6,000 9,000 12,000 More than

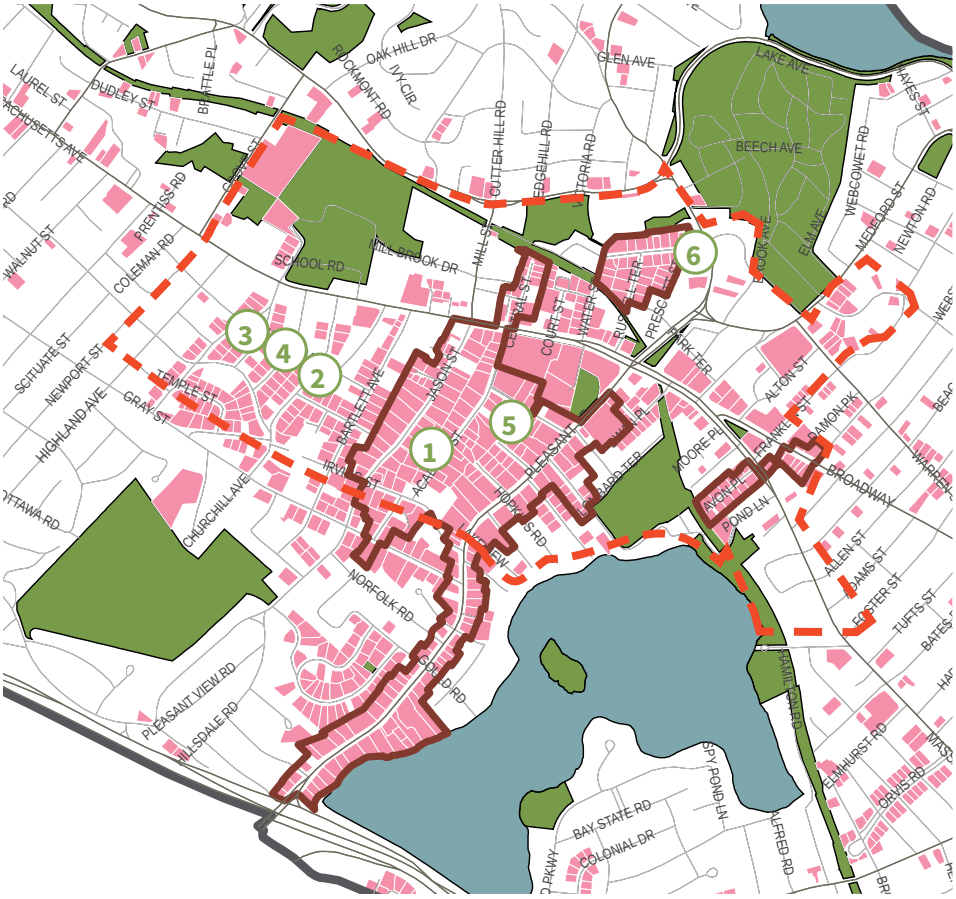
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

0 0.24 0.31 0.40 0.53 More than



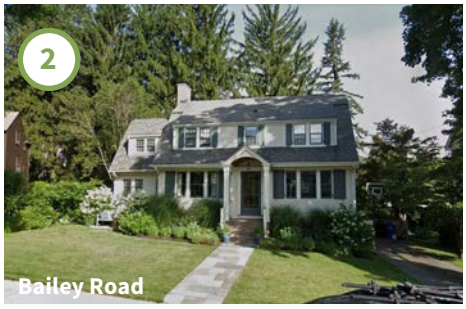
Residential Style

- 2F, 3F, Multi-family (Small-Medium)
- Multi-family (High-rise)
- Row House
- Small Typology (Cape, Bungalow)
- Colonial, Colonial Garrison
- "Old Style", Tudor
- Split level
- 1-story Ranch, Raised Ranch
- Conventional, Contemporary
- Non-residential, Other




Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary






*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - Jason Heights

## Dominant Styles
**Colonial, Old Style, Cape**

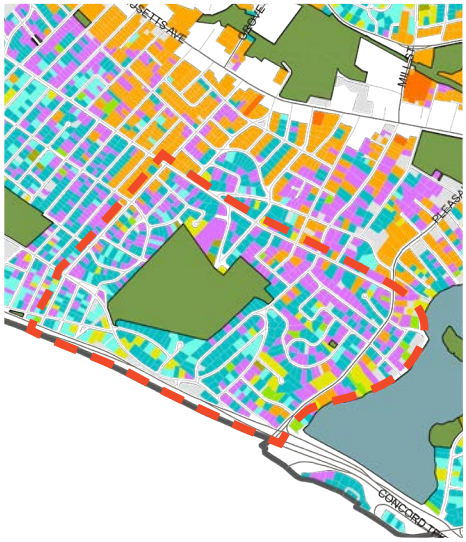
## Year Built, Median
**1930**

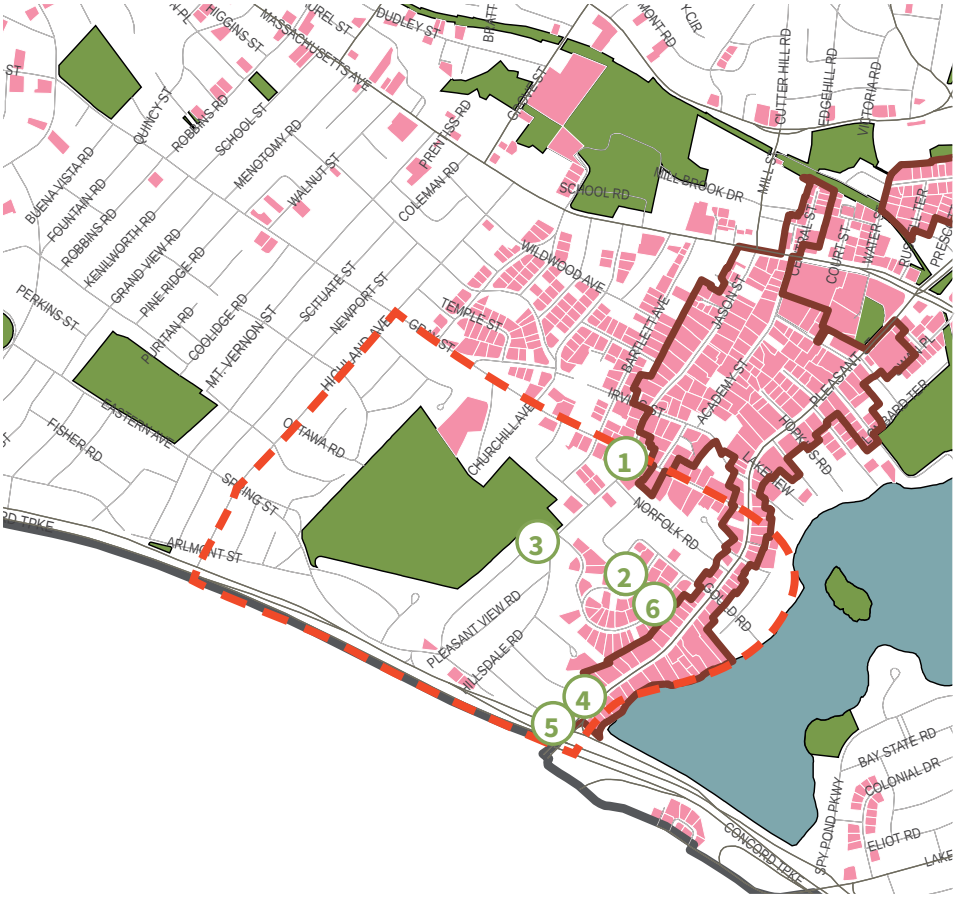
## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.31** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

## Lot Size, Median
**7,041 sf** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

South of Arlington Center, Jason Heights is distinguished by its larger lot sizes and many older houses. The core of the neighborhood was a 1928 division of a large lot called George Hill's market garden. Many of the homes incorporate eclectic elements such as a Tudor-revival front chimney.



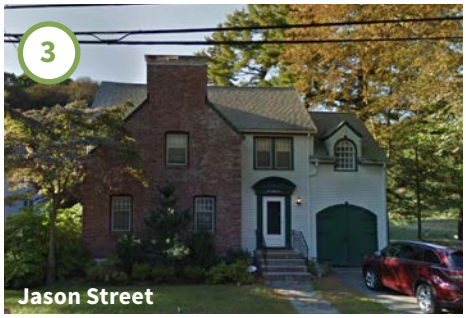






Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary









*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles
# Arlington Heights, Poets Corner, Little Scotland

## Dominant Styles
**Colonial, Old Style, Cape, Two-Family**

## Year Built, Median
**1928** | Arlington Heights
**1952** | Poets Corner
**1950** | Little Scotland

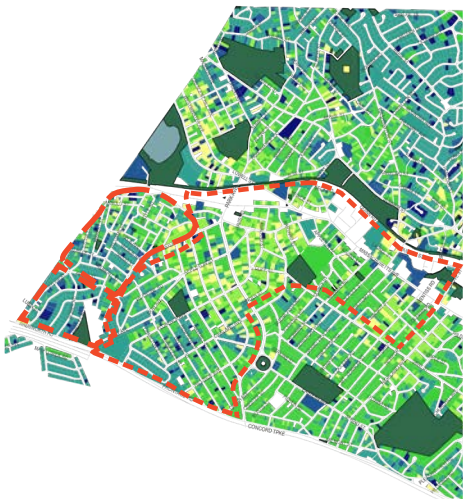
## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.31** | Arlington Heights
**0.27** | Poets Corner
**0.37** | Little Scotland

*(0.34 Arlington median)*

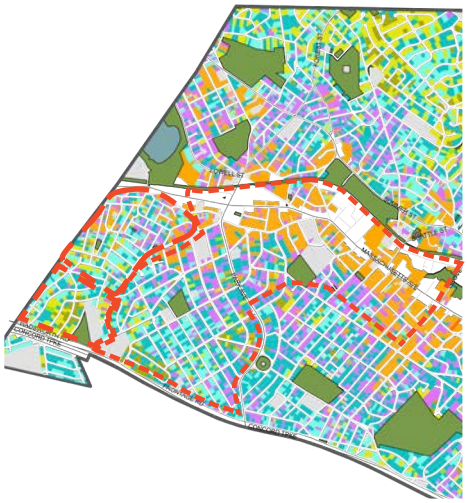
## Lot Size, Median
**6,197 sf** | Arlington Heights
**6,841sf** | Poets Corner
**4,582 sf** | Little Scotland

*(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

Arlington Heights originally started as an agricultural community with larger houses and farmland. It marks the west end of the Massachusetts Avenue spine that bisects Arlington. Eventually, these larger lots were divided into smaller lots and houses. Little Scotland, originally built in 1895-96, is the unofficial name of the Arlington Heights Park, a large lot of land that was subdivided, where all the streets are named after places in Scotland. Poets Corner was generally developed later, post World War II.

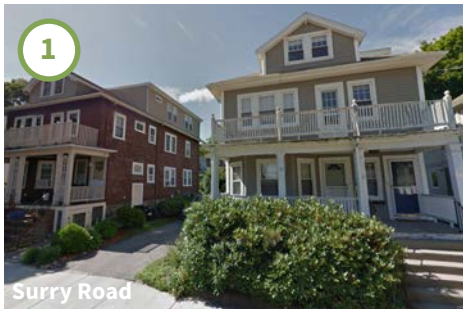


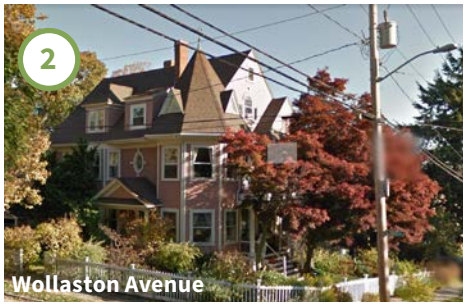


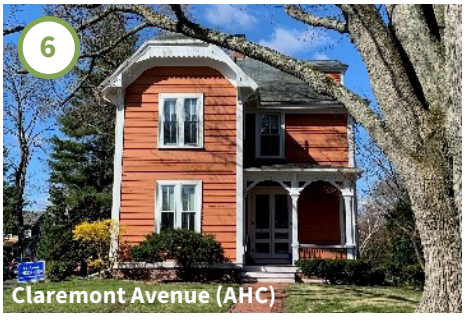

Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary

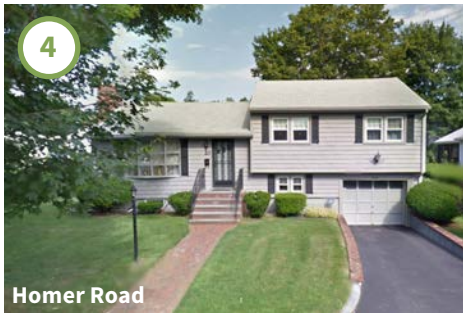











*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - Robbins Farm

## Dominant Styles
**Colonial, Old Style, Cape**

## Year Built, Median
**1931**

## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.33** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

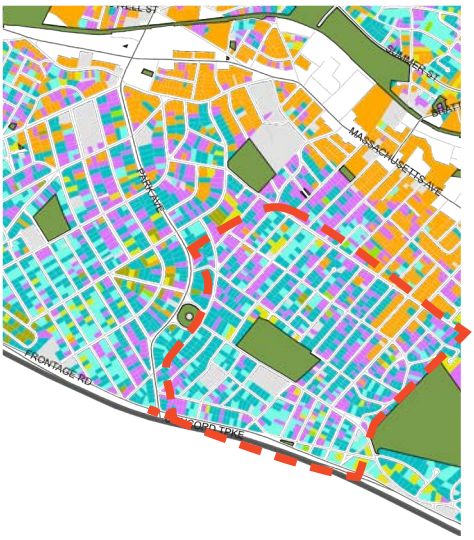
## Lot Size, Median
**5,222 sf** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

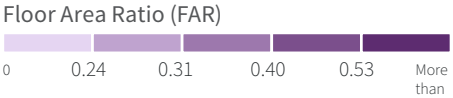
Robbins Farm is named after its large park at its core. It is a sub-area of Arlington Heights. The street grid runs up the hill, creating a stepped condition between houses. The houses were also generally built in the 1920s and built on smaller lots. There are many examples of Cape-style or Bungalow-style houses. Some of them have been redeveloped in the recent decade.

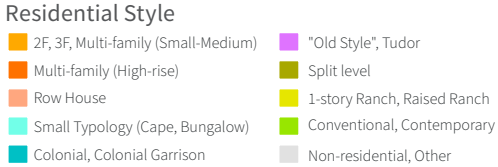










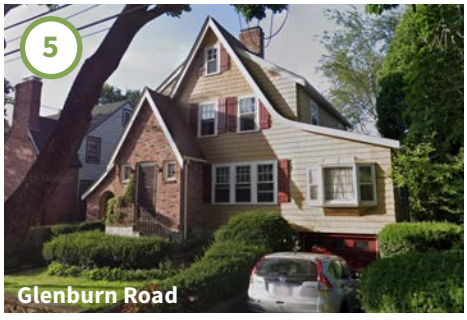




Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary









*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - Mount Gilboa, Turkey Hill

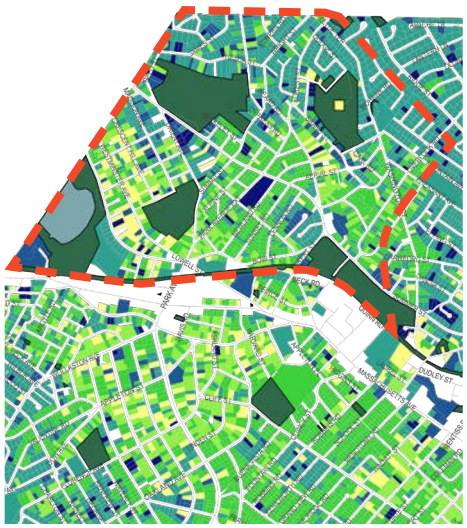
### Dominant Styles
**Old Style, Colonial, Cape, Ranch**

### Year Built, Median
**1940**

### Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.29** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

### Lot Size, Median
**6,101 sf** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

The area around Mount Gilboa is primarily characterized by its historic district and diversity of architectural styles. Meanwhile, the area around Turkey Hill has many mid-20th century and modern-day constructions. New, larger homes are being built more recently, particularly around Turkey Hill.



Year Built

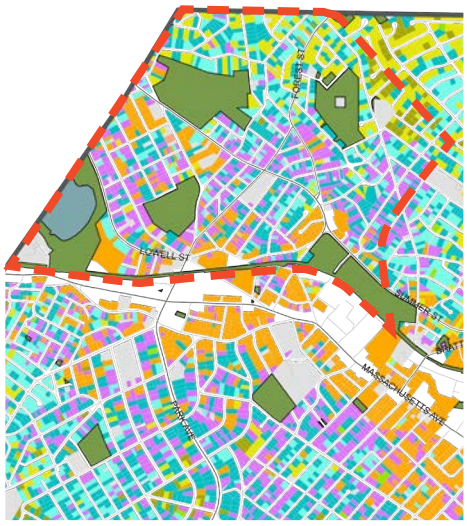
Before 1900 1920 1945 1970 2000 2018

Lot Size (square feet)

0 5,000 6,000 9,000 12,000 More than

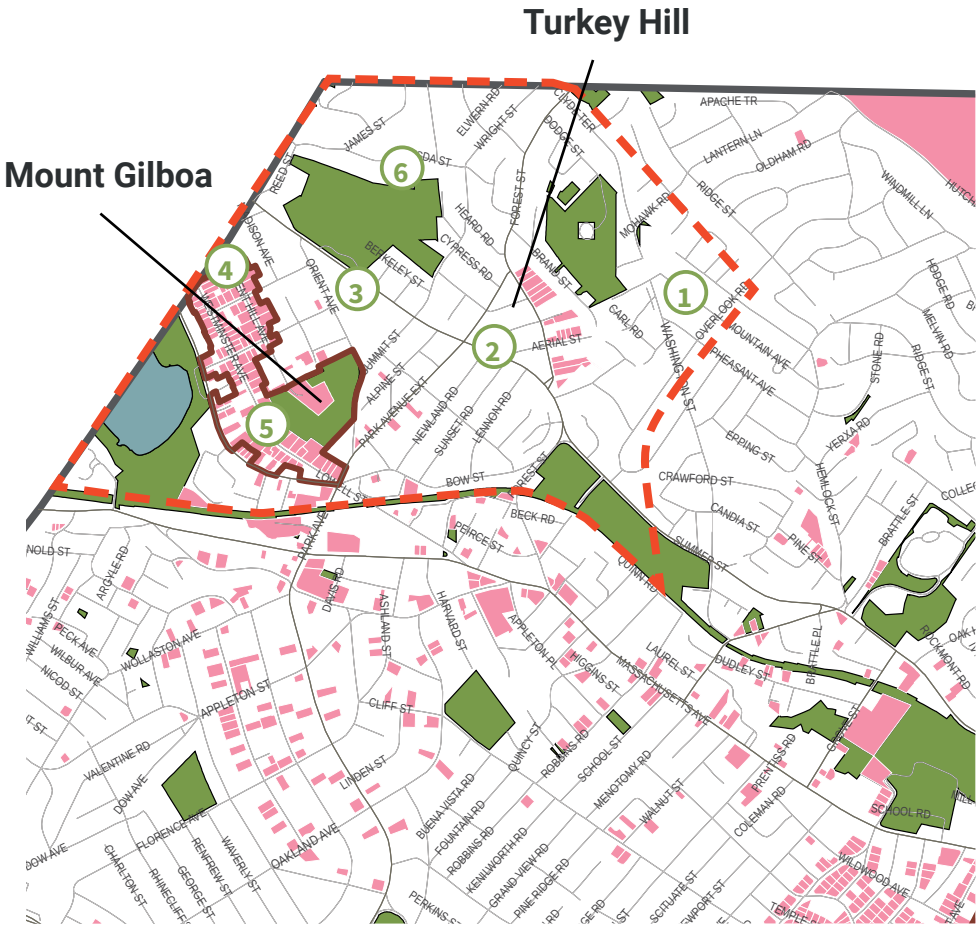
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

0 0.24 0.31 0.40 0.53 More than

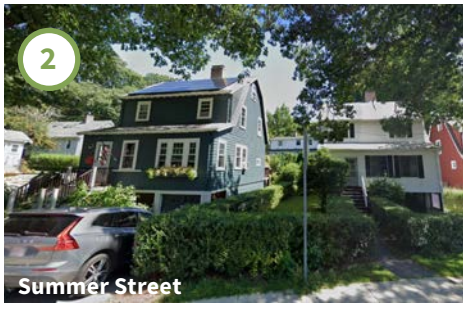


Residential Style

- 2F, 3F, Multi-family (Small-Medium)
- Multi-family (High-rise)
- Row House
- Small Typology (Cape, Bungalow)
- Colonial, Colonial Garrison
- "Old Style", Tudor
- Split level
- 1-story Ranch, Raised Ranch
- Conventional, Contemporary
- Non-residential, Other

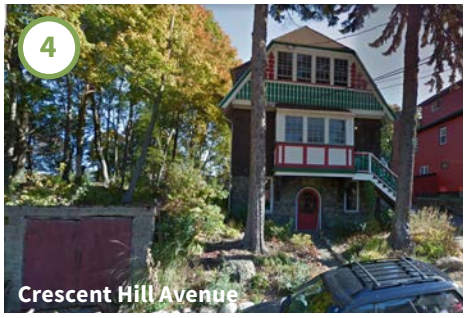













*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Neighborhood Profiles - Morningside

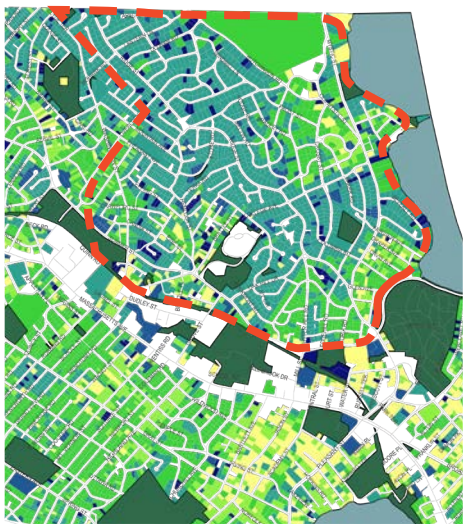
## Dominant Styles
**Ranch, Colonial, Cape, Old Style**

## Year Built, Median
**1951**

## Floor Area Ratio, Median
**0.27** *(0.34 Arlington median)*

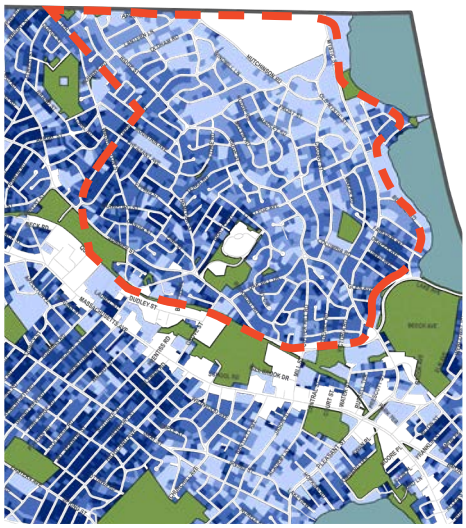
## Lot Size, Median
**7,719** *(6,081 sf Arlington median)*

Morningside consists of larger lots because it is predominantly R0 and the lowest-density area of Arlington. In the 1950's and 1960's, much of the area was developed with colonial revival ranch homes. In the historic pockets, there are many examples of "old style" and colonial houses. These older pockets are generally closer to Arlington Center and Mill Brook. New constructions has been replacing some of the ranch homes, such as on Epping Street.



Year Built

Before 1900 1920 1945 1970 2000 2018

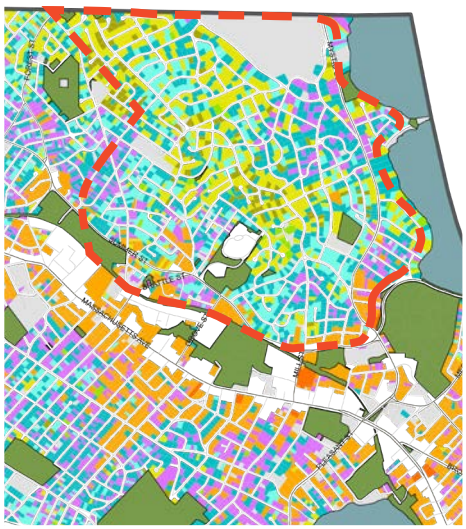


Lot Size (square feet)

0 5,000 6,000 9,000 12,000 More than

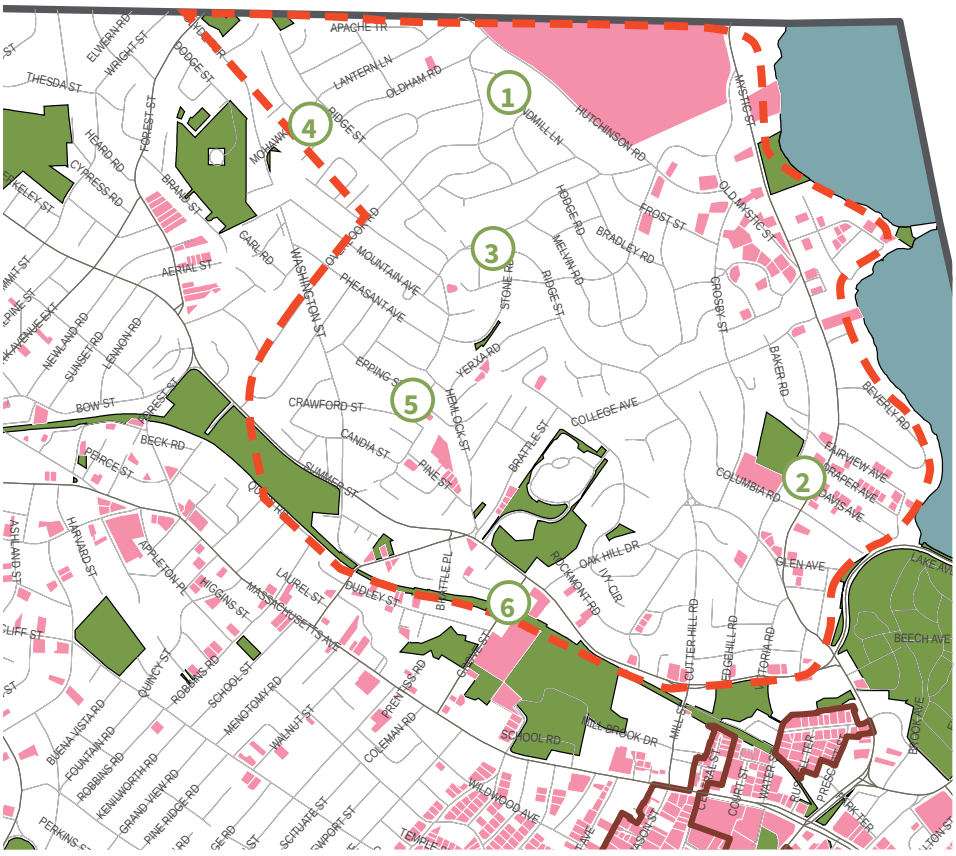
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

0 0.24 0.31 0.40 0.53 More than



Residential Style

- 2F, 3F, Multi-family (Small-Medium)
- Multi-family (High-rise)
- Row House
- Small Typology (Cape, Bungalow)
- Colonial, Colonial Garrison
- "Old Style", Tudor
- Split level
- 1-story Ranch, Raised Ranch
- Conventional, Contemporary
- Non-residential, Other




Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) or Historic District properties

Historic District boundary







*Source: Google Streetview.*

# 2.4 Zoning and Permitting Process Analysis

## Differences between neighborhoods and housing typologies are not captured by the broad zoning districts.

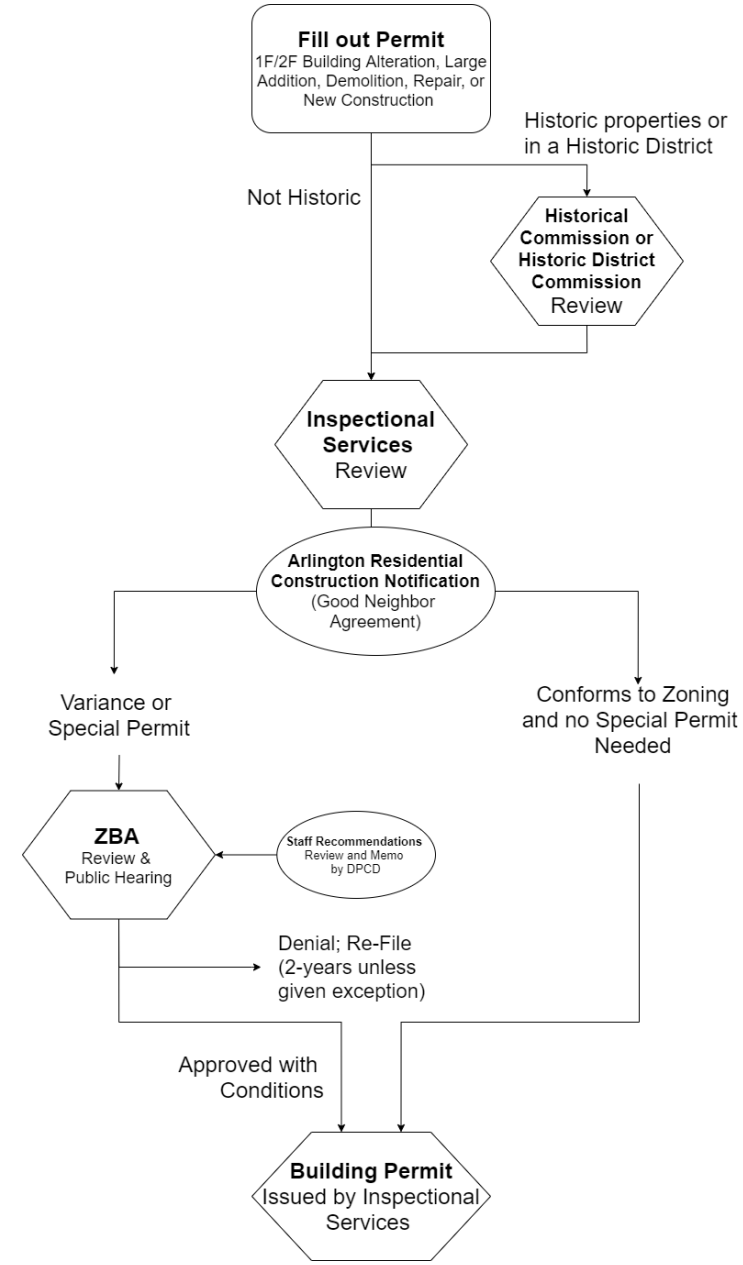
Most of Arlington is zoned as R0, R1, or R2 districts. R0 and R1 are single-family residential districts; R2 is a two-family residential district.

Before the Inspection Services Department (ISD) review, if a property is on the Arlington Historical Commission's list or in a local historic district, it is first passed to the appropriate commission for review prior to ISD's review. More than 1,200 properties are either in a historic district or an Arlington Historical Commission (AHC)-designated property. All alterations, demolitions, and new construction of these properties that are visible by the public must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness by the relevant historic district commission.

The Arlington Residential Construction Notification or 'Good Neighbor Agreement' (GNA) requires projects to give at least seven day's notice to all abutters within 200 feet of the construction site before work can commence. The GNA articulates a series of rules for construction in residential areas and addresses a range of concerns, such as: hours of operation, noise, dumpsters and waste removal, dust control, tree protection, and more.

Projects that require a variance or special permit must be reviewed and voted on by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**Existing Zoning - Permitting Process**



## Zoning Bylaw- Residential Zoning Subdistricts

| | R0 | R1 | R2 | R3 | R4 | R5 | R6 | R7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Single-family detached dwelling** | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| **Six or more single family dwellings on one or more contiguous lots** | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |
| **Two-family dwelling, duplex** | | | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| **Six or more units in two-family dwellings or duplex dwelling on one or more contiguous lots** | | | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |
| **Three-family dwelling** | | | | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |
| **Townhouse** | | | | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |
| **Apartment building** | | | | | | SP | SP | SP |
| **Conversion to apartments, up to 18 units per acre, with no alteration to the exterior of the building** | | | | | SP | SP | | |
| **Single-room occupancy building** | | | | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |
| **Group home** | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| **Conversion of one- or two-family dwelling to bed and breakfast** | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |
| **Assisted living residence** | | | | | | | SP | |
| **Dormitory** | | | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP | SP |

*(Empty) - Not Permitted* *Y - Permitted* *SP - Special Permit - Zoning Board of Appeals or Redevelopment Board, as applicable.*

## Zoning Bylaw- Dimensional Requirements

| | Minimum Lot Area (sf) | Minimum Lot Area per Unit (sf) | Minimum Lot Frontage (ft) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **R0** | 9,000 | --- | 75 |
| **R1, R2** | 6,000 | --- | 60 |
| **R3 - Townhouse** | --- | 2,500 | 45 |
| **R3 - Other permitted residential use** | 5,000 | --- | 45 |

## Zoning Bylaw- Dimensional Requirements

| | Front Yard (ft) | Side Yard (ft) | Rear Yard (ft) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **R0, R1** | 25 | 10 | --- |
| **Rear (lot depth 100 ft or more)** | --- | --- | 20 |
| **Rear (lot depth < 100 ft)** | --- | --- | 20% lot depth |
| **Accessory buildings and garage structures** | 25 | 6 | 6 |
| **R2** | 20 | 10 | --- |
| **Rear (lot depth 100 ft or more)** | --- | --- | 20 |
| **Rear (lot depth < 100 ft)** | --- | --- | 20% lot depth |
| **Accessory buildings and garage structures** | 25 | 6 | 6 |
| **R3** | | | |
| **Townhouse** | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| **Other permitted residential use** | 10 | One side: min. 10 Sum of two sides: min. 16 | 20% lot depth |
| **Accessory buildings and garage structures** | 25 | 6 | 6 |

| | Landscaped Open Space (Min.) | Usable Open Space (Min.) | Maximum Lot Coverage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **R0 - Permitted residential structure** | 10% | 30% | 35% |
| **R1, R2 - Permitted residential structure** | 10% | 30% | 35% |
| **R3 - Townhouse** | 10% | 30% | --- |
| **R3 - Other permitted residential use** | 10% | 30% | 45 |

## Zoning Bylaw- Dimensional Requirements

| | Maximum Height (ft) | Maximum height (stories) | Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **R0, R1 - 1F detached dwelling** | 35 | 2 1/2 | (.35 applies only to "other permitted structure" ) |
| **R2 - 1F detached dwelling, 2F dwelling, or duplex dwelling** | 35 | 2 1/2 | (.35 applies only to "other permitted structure") |
| **R0, R1, R2** | | | |
| **Accessory Structures (>80 sf) and private garages** | 20 | 2 | --- |
| **Minor Accessory building (<=80 sf)** | 7 | 1 | --- |
| **R3** | | | --- |
| **Principal building or structure** | 35 | 3 | 0.75 |
| **Detached accessory structure (> 80 sf)** | 20 | 2 | --- |
| **Detached accessory structure (<= 80 sf)** | 7 | 1 | --- |

## Zoning Bylaw- Off-street Parking Regulations

Single-, Two-, or Three-family dwelling: 1 space per dwelling unit

Detached Garage placement:

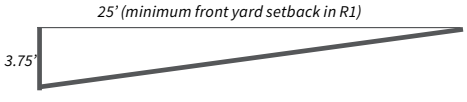
- Side Yard Minimum (Garage in rear yard): 6 ft.
- Side Yard Minimum (Garage in side yard): 10 ft.
- Rear Yard Minimum: 6 ft.

Slope:

Cannot exceed a 15% downward slope, unless by special permit

Where Parking is allowed:

- Side yard and rear yard on a paved driveway;
- Attached or detached garage; or
- Within the foundation of a dwelling.




*Examples of "Park-Unders" built before the new slope regulations were put into place.*

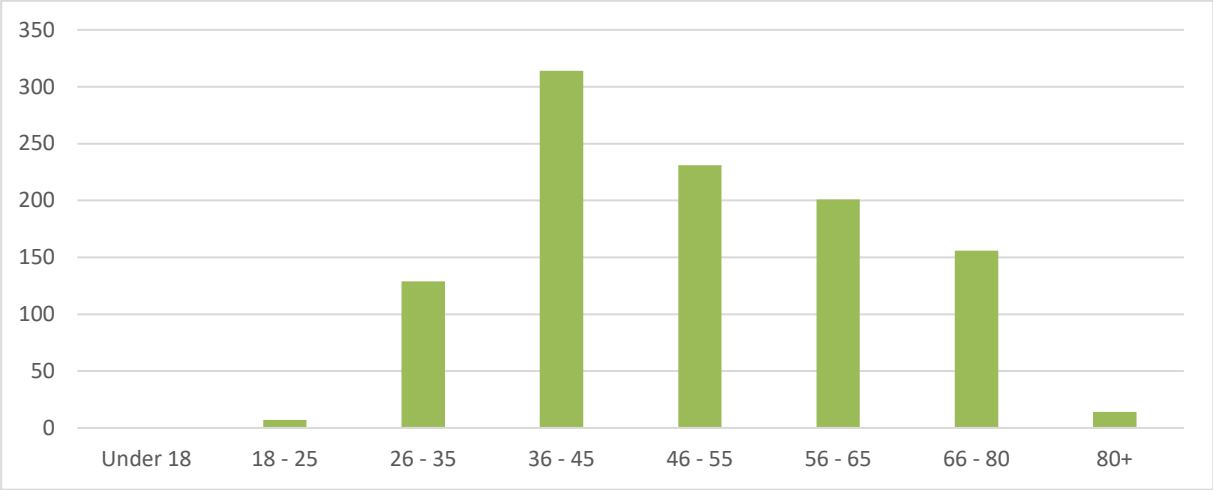
# 5 Community Engagement

Working Group members discuss houses in Morningside.

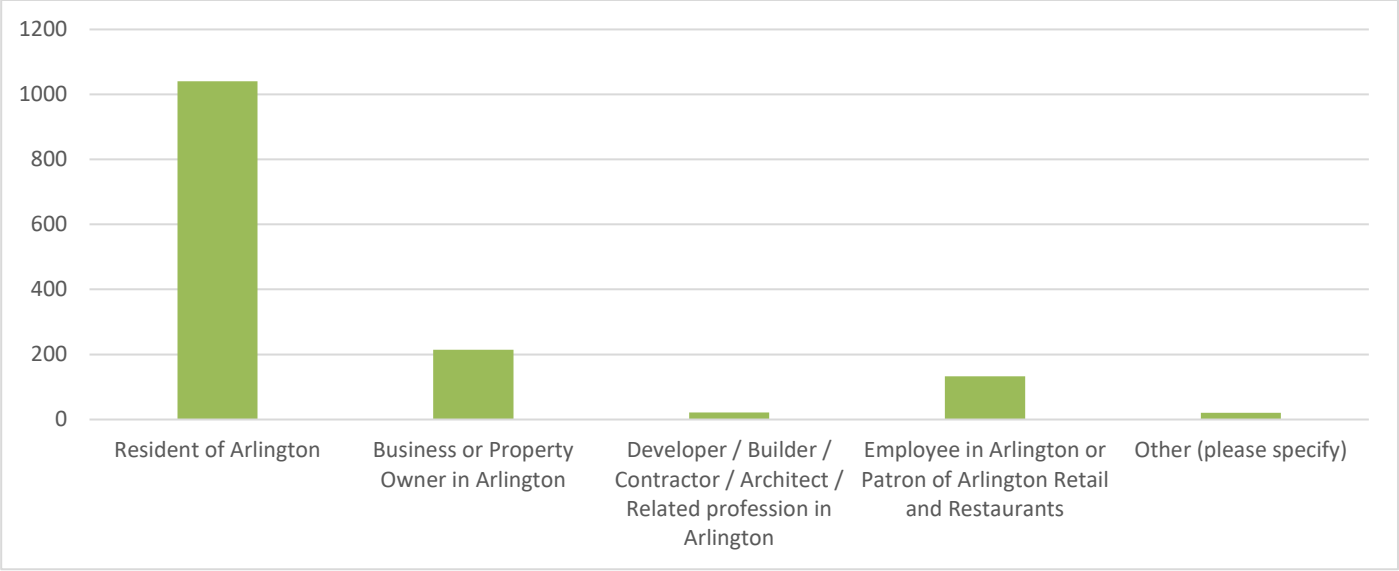
# Visual Preference Survey - May 2020

**A total of 1,071 responses were received. The survey was open from May 6, 2020 to June 8, 2020.**

## 1. Please select your age group:




## 2. Please select your association(s) with the Town of Arlington:



## 3. What do you like about Arlington's residential neighborhoods?

Emergent themes from the 884 responses include:

- Walkable, friendly neighborhoods that are convenient to many amenities and good for families.
- Balance between density and quietness.
- Variety of neighborhoods and architectural character that reflect Arlington's history.
- Green spaces, yards, and trees.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *" Walkability. Even the densest sections of East Arlington maintain a feeling of openness that you simply do not get if you walk through Somerville or Cambridge. This is what I like most about Arlington-- a happy medium between the dense city and the suburban Lexington."*
- *"They are walkable and family oriented. I like that they have unique character, such as stained glass in East Arlington. Those that have green space for gardens or play areas are also nice."*
- *"The walkability, how neighbors in my neighborhood often hang out in their front yards and porches, the tree canopy, the variety of housing styles especially older homes."*
- *"Charm of the historic homes, small but attractive yards/ gardens, walkability to parks and businesses."*
- *"They are quiet, but access to shops and transportation is nearby."*
- *" The feeling of community and quiet neighborhoods, safe for raising children and forming lifelong connections with other families."*
- *" I like the different characteristics that define the many different neighborhoods in Arlington. I like the bungalows and the clear history that similar style houses were built around the same time. I like that there's a mix of large and small houses, apartment buildings and 2 and 3 family houses."*


Word cloud generated based on frequency of different words.

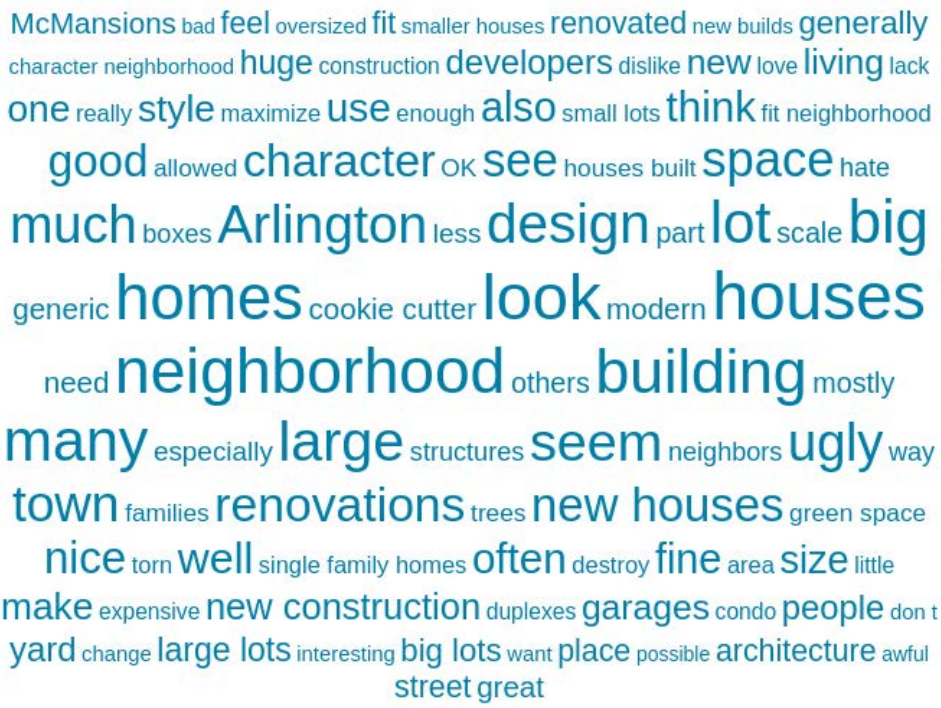
## 4. What are your thoughts on more recently built or renovated houses (from 2000 to today) in Arlington's residential neighborhoods?

Emergent themes from the 904 responses include:

- Inappropriate scale of many of the new houses relative to its parcel and surrounding neighborhood context.
- Many new houses feel generic, boxy, oversized, and priced higher.
- Sensitive renovations were preferred.
- A sizable minority felt neutral or positive towards recent constructions.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"Some are well designed, fit well with the neighborhood, respect neighbors rights and property, and are improvements to the neighborhood. However, a substantial number are completely out-of-place/character with respect to scale and massing, intrude significantly on neighbor's property with respect to loss of sunlight (shading), loss of privacy, and loss of sightlines/visual impairment..."*
- *" Too big and too expensive."*
- *" Most are pretty plain (nice word for ugly) and similar in design."*

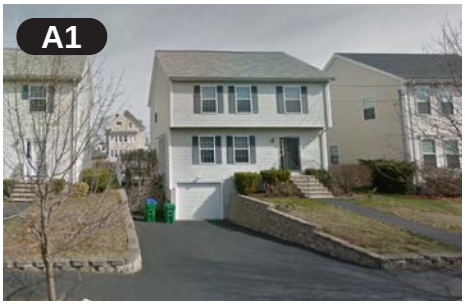



Word cloud generated based on frequency of different words.

- *"Houses should not occupy 100% of the lots they are built on. Most new houses are far too large."*
- *" I am concerned about the size of the homes and the lack of yard space."*
- *"Renovations are usually attractive, but new construction is often bland and lacks character compared to older houses."*
- *" A few new homes are a good fit in the neighborhood, but most are generic "Home Depot boxes" built to the limit of the setbacks and height restrictions. Renovations are mostly sympathetic to the existing home, but some are unsuccessful attempts at dramatic style transformation and others are simply inappropriate changes to the structure that look awful."*
- *"I think they add to a sense of modernization. Many of the houses they replace are run-down, small, and out of date."*

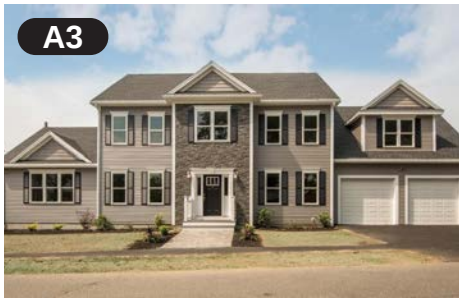
## Single-Family House (A1 - A5) - Preference Results

Survey participants ranked images of single-family houses from Highly Undesirable (1), Undesirable (2), Neutral (3), Desirable (4), and Highly Desirable (5). A rating for each image was calculated and is displayed in the following graph.



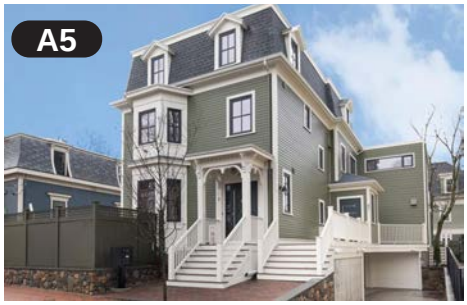

*Google Streetview*


*Zillow, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage*

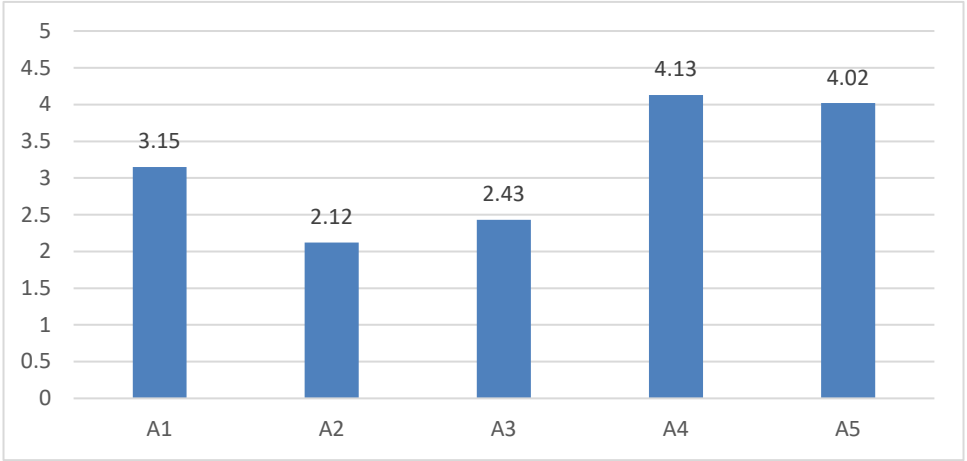



*Codwell Banker Residential Brokerage*


*Zillow, Compass*




*Compass*



414 respondents shared additional thoughts about single-family houses in Arlington and some of the reasoning for their ranking.

Emergent themes from the responses include:

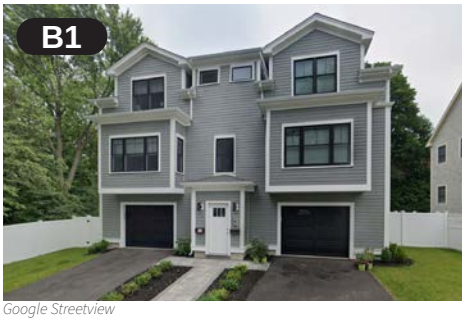
- Respondents noted that many of the examples were bland in design (A1, A2) or too large and suburban (A3).
- The other two examples (A4, A5) were rated higher for their smaller scale and detailing.
- Concerns about how houses are maximizing lot coverage and lack architectural details such as porches that reflect their context and create a welcoming street presence

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

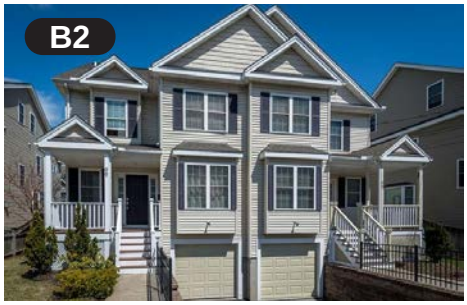
- *"Some are just boring. I like porches to help house relate to street. Don't love highly visible garage doors. Not sure my or my neighbors opinion should have sway in what private parties build. The more we regulate housing, the less we get of it."*
- *" I like front porches, gables & other details that give the house character & depth."*
- *"The first 3 looked very generic and lacking in character. All were relatively short on the trees and shrubs found in Arlington."*
- *"Don't like the garage right on the street (A2); lot grading A-1 is disruptive; like the way A5 fits in with the neighborhood"*
- *"A1 is just blah. A2 is interesting but too big for it's neighbor. A3 is just ugly. A4 is wonderful. A5 is wonderful but does look a little more Cambridge than Arlington."*
- *"A-2 is an abomination with no outward features of interest or community facing qualities. It looks like a fortress designed to keep everyone else at bay."*
- *" The two that I felt were highly desirable have combine a traditional look with modern materials. The first two had a boxy look that felt too imposing."*
- *" Property designs that emphasize porches and gardens that face the street are much more neighborly and inviting than garages. There are creative ways to accommodate cars without centering vehicles in the street-facing design."*
- *" A-2 and A-3 are too large for the context. I'd rather see homes with smaller footprints for single-family use. Lot A-3 would be better suited to a two or three family residence. A-1 has little street appeal, but fits the neighborhood. A-2 is visually unappealing. A-4 has street appeal but still lacks windows on the sides of the house. A-5 is a large single family but looks appropriate in context. It is attractive."*
- *" These examples are not a graceful as I would like. They are clearly maximizing size or minimizing cost and only some strive for architectural value."*
- *" A-2 and A-3 typify "mcmansion" style houses with bizarre layouts, nonsensical rooflines, and external features like window size and placement placed seemingly at random to accommodate strange internal features"*

## Two-Family House (B1 - B6) - Preference Results

Survey participants ranked images of two-family houses from Highly Undesirable (1), Undesirable (2), Neutral (3), Desirable (4), and Highly Desirable (5). A rating for each image was calculated and is displayed in the following graph.




*Google Streetview*

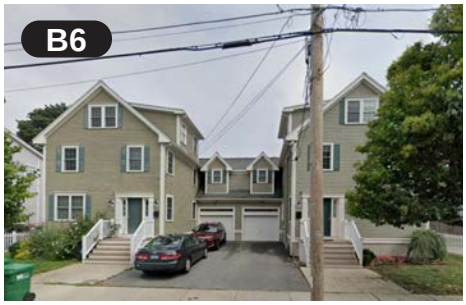



*Redfin, MLS Property Information Network, Inc*

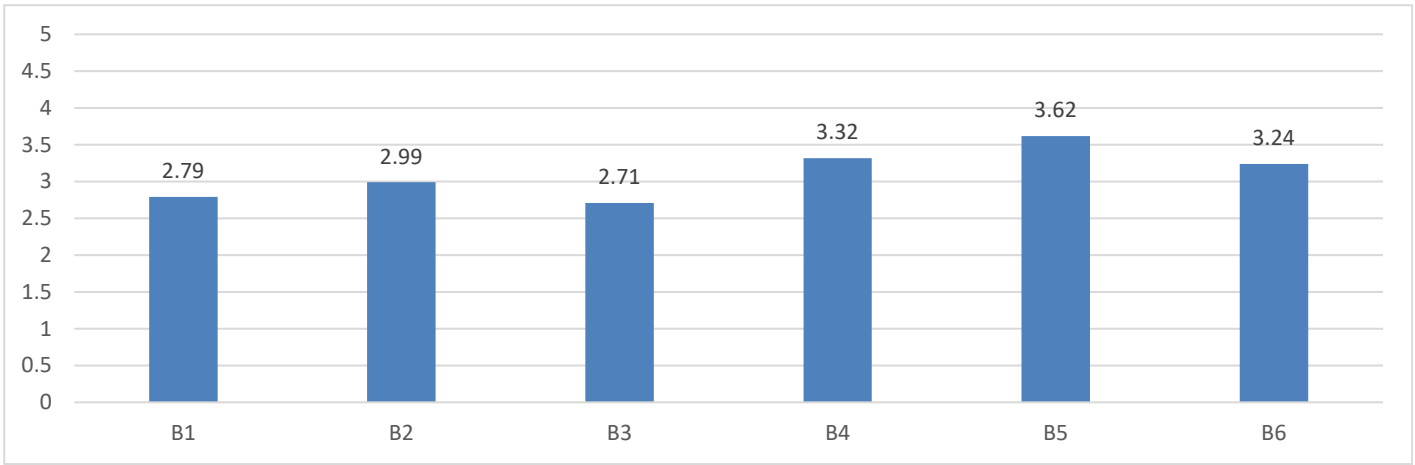

*Zillow, Eastern Massachusetts Realty Group*


*Google Streetview*


*Google Streetview*




*Google Streetview*



305 respondents shared additional thoughts about two-family houses in Arlington and some of the reasoning for their ranking.

Emergent themes from the responses include:

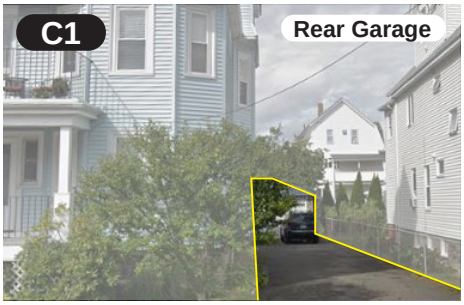
- Preference for traditional "stacked" two-family buildings (B5) rather than side-by-side townhouses (B1, B2, B3).
- Concern about dominating garages, lack of front yards, and bulky, bland design.
- The feedback was overall less positive for all of these chosen examples, relative to the rest of the survey.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"All of the above are visually fine, some more interesting than others, but no issues. The only ones that would work for me as an older person are those where I could get a first floor unit on one floor."*
- *" Density is good! These buildings do not look out of place."*
- *" B3 has an awful lot of paved space and not much green grass/ natural plantings, nor room for trees. They all look very tall to me - does everyone require a third floor to store all of their "stuff" these days??"*
- *" The parking minimums and requirements present a huge problem for townhouses. I am strongly supportive of densifying Arlington, but want it done in a pedestrian friendly way."*
- *" A lot of modern townhouses force garages into the scheme in awkward ways. I prefer the traditional two-family over/under rather than the side by side, for Arlington."*
- *" The first several images are too big, come too close to the sidewalks, and overshadow everything else. I don't understand why we can't have more moderately-sized homes in new construction. The last image is the only one I prefer. It is of moderate size, its porch feels cozy and not intimidating and its style fits with the neighborhood."*
- *" I prefer options with porches. Some of these examples seemed very wide compared with what we have today. They seem like two separate homes that happen to be conjoined. I have a hard time seeing these fit well on our existing two-family lots, certainly not in East Arlington."*

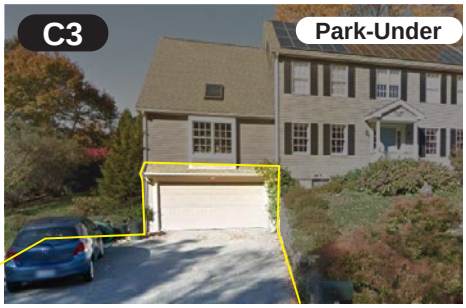
## Parking Strategies (C1 - C8) - Preference Results

Survey participants ranked images of parking strategies from Highly Undesirable (1), Undesirable (2), Neutral (3), Desirable (4), and Highly Desirable (5). A rating for each image was calculated and is displayed in the following graph.



*Google Streetview*

*Google Streetview*

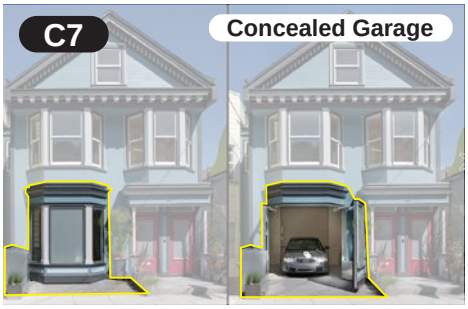


*Google Streetview*

*MLS Property Information Network, Inc*

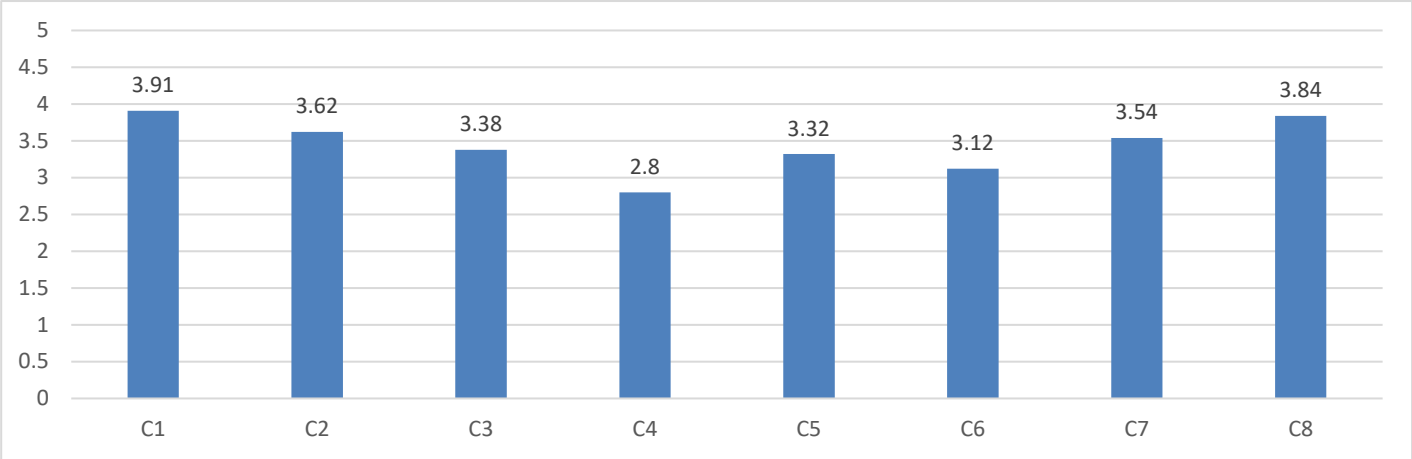
*Google Streetview*

*Google Streetview*



*Architect -Levy Art N Architecture; Ken Gutmaker Photography*

*Houzz*




302 respondents shared additional thoughts about parking strategies in Arlington.

Emergent themes from the responses include:

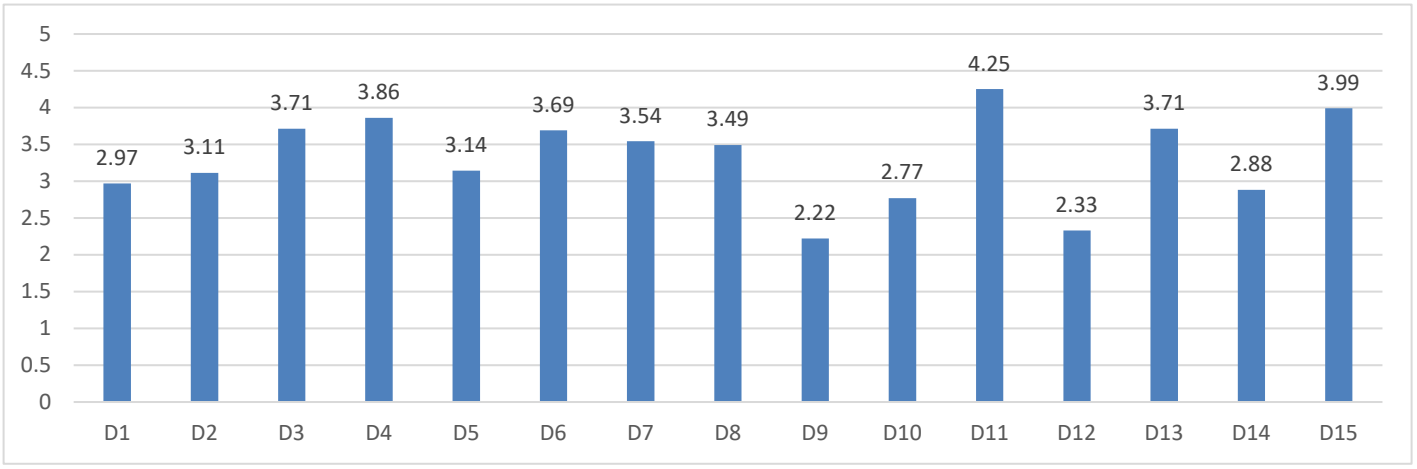
- Desire to see reduction in paved surfaces and some flexibility in parking requirements.
- Desire to keep garage and parking not at the forefront of the house.
- Parking and garages should not increase the height of the house.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"Please find a way to reduce the impermeable surface. Many two families in particular have all yard space covered in asphalt. I would like to see new developments required to provide some green space both for aesthetics and climate resilience."*
- *"Would prefer on street parking be available. Would enable increased density."*
- *"The garage should not be the most prominent feature of the house"*
- *"The steep grade of park-under garages is an undesirable eyesore and a parking hassle for the residents. If the lot is large enough for an alternative type of garage (ground-level, side, etc), the town should not allow for park-under garages simply so that developers can put an oversized home on the lot."*
- *" These ground level, concealed garages will only work if they do not increase the height of the home. In that case, garages on the property itself are better."*
- *"Driveways and garages are best on the sides and back of houses."*
- *"All these parking strategies are mostly fine and are really dependent on the lot characteristics. Allow for flexibility in parking."*

## Additions (D1 - D15) - Preference Results

Survey participants ranked images of additions from Highly Undesirable (1), Undesirable (2), Neutral (3), Desirable (4), and Highly Desirable (5). A rating for each image was calculated and is displayed in the following graph.





*Google Streetview*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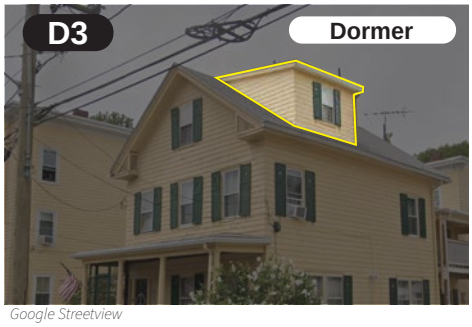


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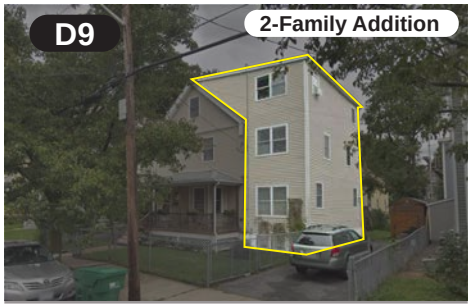
*Old House Online, Gordon Bock,*


*Old House Online, Gordon Bock,*


*Old House Online, Gordon Bock,*

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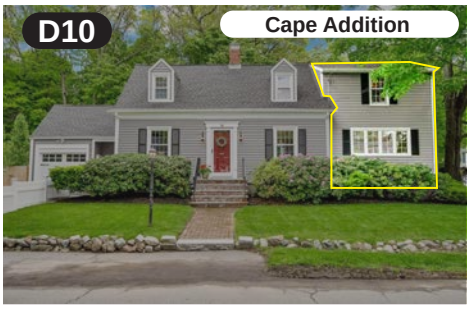
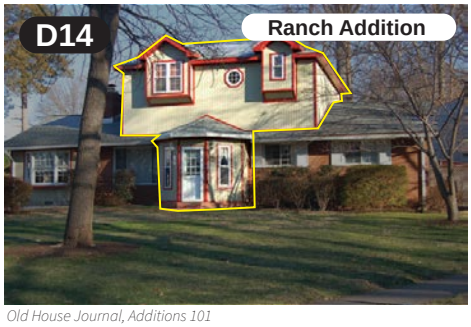



*Angela DiRusso of William Raveis R.E. & Home Services*


*Keith Robertson, Crismatec*


*Old House Journal, Additions 101*


*Old House Online, Gordon Bock*




*Old House Journal, Additions 101*


*Metzler Home Builders*

237 respondents shared additional thoughts about additions and renovations in Arlington.

Emergent themes from the responses include:

- Ideal additions renovations (D4, D6, D11) look as if they were part of the original structure rather than an afterthought.
- Good additions use the same details and materials as the original house. They also are smaller than the original house.
- Guidelines for additions are important but should not overly restrict residents from updating their houses.
- Some respondents noted ADUs and opinions were divided.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"With the high cost of housing in Arlington, it's important to allow homeowners to make additions to their houses and not impose an arduous review process for most additions (less than 1,000 sf)."*
- *"Additions would need to consider scale, proportion to lot and surroundings - other homes, street, etc... Some of these additions are huge! I do not think Arlington lots can accommodate such additions."*
- *"Many additions are essentially new, larger houses attached to older, smaller houses. They are oversized and the original house is the size of what one would have considered an addition."*
- *"The ideal addition doesn't affect the facade as visible from the street."*
- *" Arlington is a special place to live in. With the rise in property prices, not just in town but in the metro west area, more and more residents are choosing to stay and renovate their existing homes. As a homeowner, I strongly feel that residents should have the flexibility to design their homes as per their needs. Restricting renovations due to aesthetics is not useful. There also needs to be equity in rules governing expansions. A single family homeowner with a large lot can get away with a lot more than a multi-family owner."*
- *"It is hard to describe what is good or bad but the addition must look like it could have been part of the original architectural design of the house to be aesthetically pleasing."*
- *"Best are the ones that incorporate the existing architectural features and blend in the additions. Some literally look like boxes stuck on the sides/top. Those are not as attractive."*

## 5. Now that you've taken the visual preference survey, what do you hope the Residential Design Guidelines will accomplish?

Emergent themes from the 620 responses include a desire for the guidelines to:

- Encourage diversity in high-quality design.
- Encourage new houses that fit in with the neighborhood, particularly around scale and lot coverage.
- Promotes better designs without creating too many restrictions to new housing and renovations.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"Give some guidelines without being overly intrusive."*
- *"To preserve some of the character of Arlington residential neighborhoods."*
- *"I hope the guidelines will thoughtfully allow modernizing Arlington's neighborhoods for today's living needs."*
- *"Flexibility to allow homeowners to build or add space while not completely being out of scale with neighbors, and while maintaining a pedestrian-scale street environment and "neighborly" feel. Along those lines front porches/stoops should be required or highly encouraged."*
- *"Keep Arlington from having too many ugly new houses, while allowing people to have more spacious, modernized, energy efficient homes."*

## 6.What concerns or reservations do you have about the Residential Design Guidelines?

Emergent themes from the 557 responses include concerns that the guidelines will:

- Be too strict and discourage any new development.
- Regulate taste, creating too much uniformity, or still allow oversized houses and lack enforcement.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"I am afraid if we make the guidelines appear very strict or arbitrary they will not be accepted, yet we need something to protect the integrity of the town architecture and greenspaces."*
- *"Too much restriction on people's freedom and ability to choose how to renovate their homes."*
- *"They allow way to much density, not enough set backs and too small lots."*
- *" Too lenient to developers, so they use cheap materials; rip up existing green space and trees; create huge, out-of-scale housing; disregard surrounding properties (design, scale)."*
- *"I am concerned that individual taste in housing design may be stifled to meet a community norm."*
- *" How will they be made attractive to builders? If the trade-offs for adherence are allowing larger houses I'd be opposed."*
- *" Not everyone has the same aesthetic preferences which may make it harder for someone to renovate in a style they personally prefer."*

## 7.Finally, what questions do you have about the Residential Design Guidelines?

Emergent questions from the 309 responses include:

- Clarity around goals, timeline, and process for the guidelines.
- How the guidelines will be used and enforced.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"Does Arlington want to maintain or to achieve an unique style while staying affordable? Does Arlington encourage sustainable building practices? Do other communities send out surveys?"*
- *"How will guidelines impact what becomes regulation?"*
- *"What is the purpose of the guidelines? Who will be the final arbiter? Will they be used to unjustly prevent something from being built?"*
- *"If they are voluntary, how will they be enforced? Enforcement of Zoning Bylaws is already spotty."*
- *"Will these be guidelines or requirements, will exceptions be permitted and under what circumstances?"*
- *"Is this a binding initiative with public forums, or what is the next step for input into this process?"*

## 8.In addition, while the focus of the design guidelines will be on the design of the building itself, landscaping around the house is important as well. Do you have any thoughts about landscaping?

Emergent themes from the 517 responses include:

- Emphasis on the need for green space and tree cover while avoiding impermeable, paved yards.
- Avoid regulating or requiring a certain kind of landscaping and leave landscaping design decisions to homeowners.

Example quotes have been compiled to illustrate a variety of viewpoints:

- *"Landscaping can improve the visual look of a neighborhood. I think how one landscapes (if at all) should not be regulated."*
- *"I used to live in a neighborhood with a Homeowner's Association. They stifle creativity. Let's let people decide how they want to landscape for themselves."*
- *"Eco-friendly landscaping vs. generic grassy lawns would be great. Gardens and raised beds also enhance quality of life and food security. Consider edible plants and fruit-bearing trees over simply aesthetically “pleasing” trees and shrubs."*
- *"Landscaping can be tremendously costly, and is often beyond the reach of most already financially stressed community members. Be generously indulgent to homeowners with any guidelines."*
- *"It is important for houses to have yards with unpaved surfaces for rainwater management."*

## Summary of Findings

The survey collected varied perspectives about Arlington's residential neighborhoods.

Overall, respondents love Arlington because of its balance between urban convenience and the community feel of a quieter, smaller town. Respondents also appreciated the green open spaces and leafy feel of the residential streets. Finally, many celebrated Arlington's architectural history and diversity.

Many residents had concerns about recent developments. Some noted that new homes were too large and thus priced significantly higher, reducing the stock of relatively affordable homes. Many perceived that these new homes were built to their zoning maximum and did not provide adequate open space and setbacks from the street and abutting houses. Others criticized the "boxiness" and lack of architectural quality of new houses.

Specifically for single-family houses, the images with the highest ratings (A4, A5) were noted for their higher quality of architectural details and smaller presence on the street. Many noted that they wanted to see more space dedicated to green space in the front yard.

For two-family houses, the image with the highest rating (B5) looked closer to the common stacked two-family houses. Many respondents reacted less favorably to the duplex or townhouse options, noting that they were too high and dominated by the garage and driveway.

For parking strategies, the images with higher ratings tend to minimize the visual impact of the garage or driveway. These include rear garages (C1), side garages (C2), and the garage designed to blend in with the house (C8). The park-under that worked with the topography and did not include a steep downward slope (C3) was rated higher than the park-under duplex (C4).

For renovations, the images that showed additions that looked as if they were originally built as part of the house were the most successful (D4, D11). Over-sized additions and dormers were least successful (D9). Another example of a successful renovation completely transformed the original house while maintaining the same frontage, so the entire house felt cohesive as one (D15).

For the goals of the Design Guidelines, most respondents wanted a set of guidelines that would promote quality design that fits well in the neighborhood but would not overly restrict development, constraining supply or stifling creativity.

**How the Feedback was Incorporated into the Document**

The feedback from the survey highlighted the key concerns of the community and began to address the level of balance between prescriptiveness and flexibility that respondents wanted to see.

Based on the survey results, the next step of the community process focused on gathering feedback on the specific tools to evaluate new homes and renovations. Differentiating between zoning, requirements, and guidelines was key. There was an emphasis on how these guidelines will be used and at what step of the building permitting process.

# Virtual Community Forum- June 30, 2020

## Overview

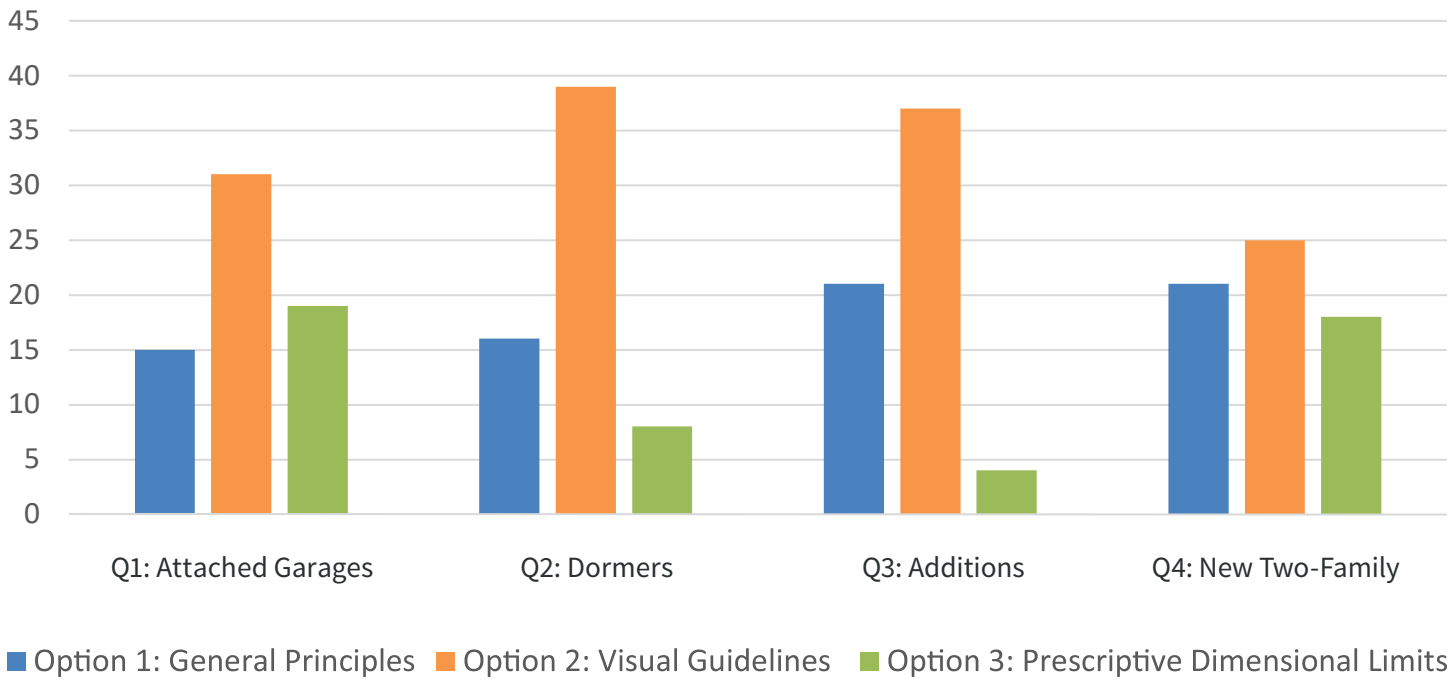
On June 30, 2020, the Town of Arlington and Harriman hosted an online virtual community forum. There were approximately 42 participants who attended the meeting. After the forum, a do-it-yourself survey adaptation of the community forum and recording of the forum allowed additional residents who did not attend the meeting to participate. There were 27 respondents to the follow-up survey.

After the presentation on the project overview and schedule, existing conditions report, and visual preference survey results, there were two open Question and Answer sections and an online poll. Participants were asked to respond to three approaches to design guidelines, ranging from high-level urban design principles to more prescriptive dimensional limits.

## Results

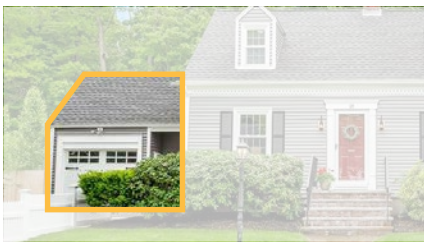
The results of the forum poll and survey are shown in the graph below. The example guidelines are shown on the subsequent pages. Overall, most respondents preferred seeing a "middle" approach - specific visual guidelines that act as suggestions rather than requirements. This strikes a balance between being too prescriptive and being too general and lacking "teeth." During the Q&A, participants pointed out specific design issues they hoped to see addressed, such as the prevalence of garages and the desire to see welcoming yards and porches. Some participants, including local designers and developers, were concerned that the guidelines would be too restrictive and would increase costs.

**Aggregate Forum Live Poll and Follow-up Survey Results**



## Question 1: Which approach to design guidelines for attached garages do you prefer?

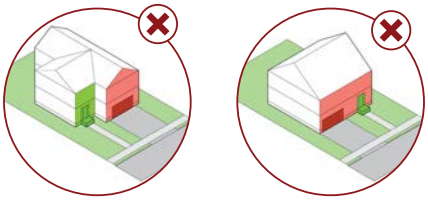
### Option 1



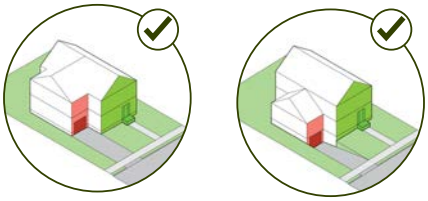
The appearance of Attached Garages should be minimized. The attached garage should not dominate the principal façade.

*Specific Recommendations are for illustrative purposes only.*

### Option 2

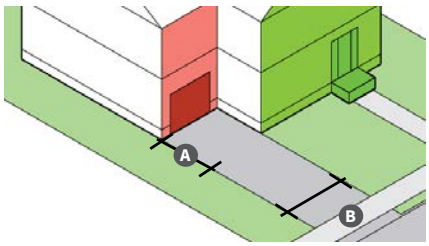


The appearance of Attached Garages should be minimized. Attached Garage should not be flush with the principal façade or extend past the principal façade.



Ground-level and park-under, attached garages should be set back from the principal façade to minimize their visual impact.

### Option 3




A Front-facing garage setback from primary façade: 8 ft

B Single-car garage doors are preferred. Double-car garages should use two single-car doors instead of one double-wide garaged door. Driveways should taper and not be wider than 12 ft at the point of intersection with the sidewalk.

## Question 2: Which approach to design guidelines for shed dormers do you prefer?

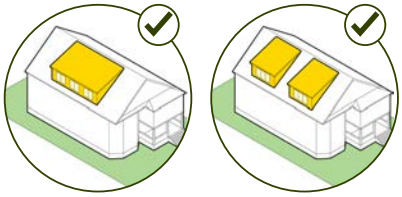
### Option 1

Shed dormer additions should be designed to be consistent in scale and style with the existing building and neighborhood. The dormer should be sized appropriately.

*Specific Recommendations are for illustrative purposes only.*

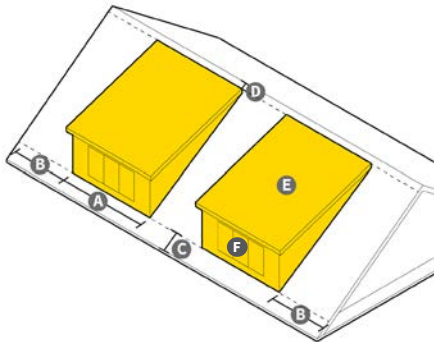
### Option 2

The dormer should not overpower the primary roof and create the appearance of an additional story.



The total width of the dormer(s) should not exceed 50% of the eave length of the roof below and be set back appropriately from the top ridge and edges of the roof. Large shed dormers are encouraged to be broken up into multiple dormers. A majority of the dormer façade should be glazed.

### Option 3




- **A** Total dormer width should not exceed 50% of the eave length of the roof below.
- **B** Side wall setback: 3 ft
- **C** Front/Rear wall setback: 3 ft
- **D** Ridge setback: 1 ft
- **E** Shed roof slope (min): 4:12, 18.4°
- **E** Glazed width of dormer percentage (min): 75% of total dormer width

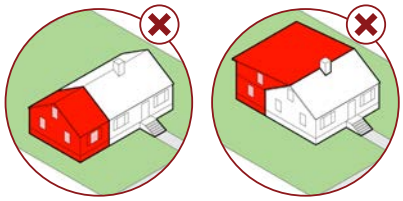
## Question 3: Which approach to design guidelines for additions on small house typologies, such as Capes and Bungalows, do you prefer?

### Option 1

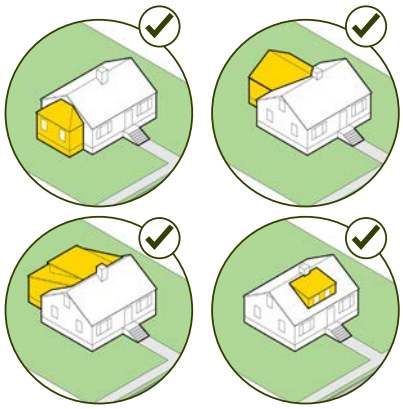
- A Cape Cod house is a low, broad, single-story frame building with a moderately steep pitched gabled roof, a large central chimney, and very little ornamentation.
- Additions should match the scale, material, window pattern, and roof style of the existing house.
- Additions should not significantly alter the visual alignment, rhythm, and spacing of the street.

*Specific Recommendations are for illustrative purposes only.*

### Option 2

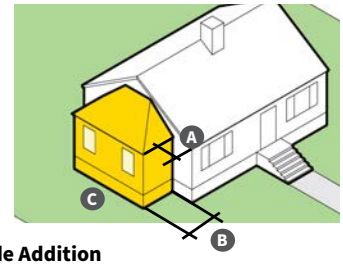


Additions should be designed to be smaller in scale to the existing Cape-styled house.



Additions should match the scale, material, window pattern, and roof style of the existing house. Rear additions and dormers are preferred.

### Option 3

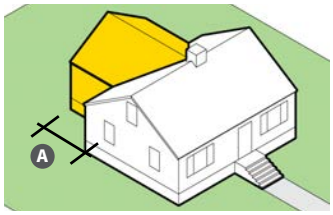



**Side Addition**

**A** Set back from primary façade: 3 ft

**B** Front width of addition: 25% of primary façade

**C** Side width of addition: 75% of side façade




**Rear Addition**

**A** Visual impact of addition should be minimized. Length of rear addition should not exceed width of existing structure. Additions should remain 1 1/2 story.

## Question 4: Which approach to design guidelines for new two-family duplexes do you prefer?

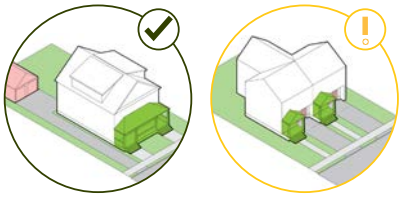
### Option 1

- The massing of new two-family duplexes should be designed to be in context with the existing buildings on the street.
- Wide duplexes should be broken up visually to match the rhythm of building spacing.
- Front-facing attached garages should not dominate the primary façade.

*Specific Recommendations are for illustrative purposes only.*

### Option 2

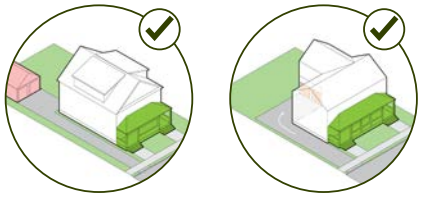
Front-facing attached garages are discouraged. The massing of new two-family duplexes should be designed to be in context with the existing buildings on the street.



Duplexes are encouraged to use rear or side garages and not locate garages on the primary façade, whenever feasible.

Front-facing attached garages should be set back from the primary façade. Spacious front porches are encouraged. Front-facing garages should incorporate transparency, materials, and details (e.g., hardware such as hinges) to create a welcoming design.

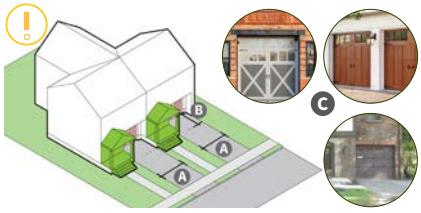
### Option 3



*Rear Garage* *Side Garage*

**Duplex - No front-facing attached garage**

Duplexes are encouraged to not locate garages on the primary façade, whenever feasible.




**Duplex - Front-facing attached garage**

Duplexes with front-facing attached garages must meet the following:

- **A** Width of garage (max): 50% of primary façade
- **B** Garage setback from primary façade and/or entrance elements (min): 8 ft
- **C** Front-facing garages should incorporate transparency, materials, and details (e.g., hardware such as hinges) to create a welcoming design.

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## Question 5: What are your thoughts on including simple alternatives and improvements in the design guidelines?

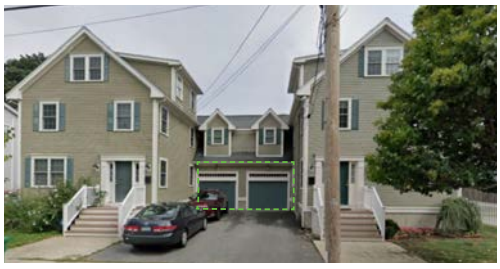
Note that any recommendations in the design guidelines will not be applied retroactively to existing houses; it will only apply to new projects. For example, an existing homeowner will not need to update their garage door. But if they are building a new home with a garage door, the design guidelines will suggest numerous alternatives to the plain white door in order to create a welcoming front façade.

### Front-facing garage door can be replaced or repainted to be more welcoming.

Before

After

Before



After

*Specific Recommendations are for illustrative purposes only.*